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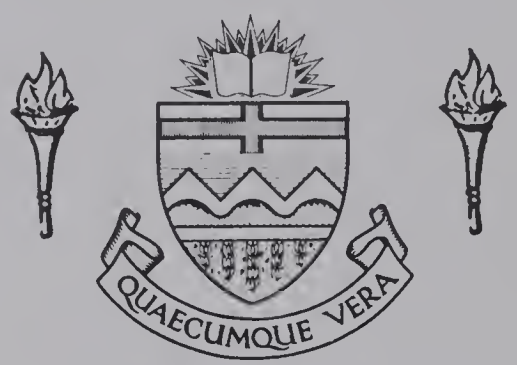

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CHANGING ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE PEASANTRY IN RUSSIAN LITERATURE

(As Reflected in the Works of Turgenev, Leskov, Uspenskii, Chekhov and Bunin)

by

© GEORGE REPETSKI

A THESIS

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Changing Attitudes Towards the Peasantry in Russian Literature (As Reflected in the Works of Turgenev, Leskov, Uspenskii, Chekhov and Bunin)," submitted by George Repetski in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

ABSTRACT

During the 1850's and 1860's the Russian intelligentsia tended to idealize the social possibilities of the peasantry. This developed into a general movement known as Populism which was of serious consequence to Russia. During the "going to the people" movements (1873 - 1874) many populist youth came into contact with real peasant life and became disappointed in the peasants.

The idealization of the peasantry and subsequent disappointment in it was reflected in the works of various Russian writers. In this thesis the author shows how the peasantry was idealized in Grigorovich's The Village and Anton Goremyka and Turgenev's A Sportsman's Notebook. The de-idealization of the peasantry is discussed as reflected in Turgenev's Virgin Soil, Leskov's The Enclosure, Uspenskii's village triology (From a Village Diary, The Peasant and Peasant Labour, The Power of the Soil), Chekhov's Peasants and Bunin's The Village.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to express my deepest appreciation to Dr. O. Zujewskyj for guiding me in the writing of this thesis.

A Note on Transliteration

With the exception of the well-known names, which are spelled in accordance with the Oxford Dictionary, the rest of the Russian names, titles of stories and journals in this thesis are given in the transliteration system listed below. Because of technical difficulties, the diacritical marks have been omitted.

Cyrillic	Transliteration	Cyrillic	Transliteration
а	a	п	p
б	b	р	r
в	v	с	s
г	g	т	t
д	d	у	u
е	e	ф	f
ё	e	х	kh
ж	zh	ц	ts
з	z	ч	ch
и	i	ш	sh
й	i	щ	shch
к	k	ъ	"
л	l	ы	y
м	m	ь	'
н	n	э	e
о	o	ю	iu
		я	ia

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
PREFACE	. . . . .	i
I.	THE HISTORICAL SETTING	1
II.	THE IDEALIZATION OF THE PEASANTRY . . .	24
III.	THE DISAPPOINTMENT IN THE PEASANTRY . .	39
IV.	BASIS FOR DISAPPOINTMENT	51
V.	CONCLUSION	100
BIBLIOGRAPHY	. . . . .	104

PREFACE

The peasant and village theme has received the attention of many Russian writers since the eighteenth century when the sentimentalists, such as Karamzin, first introduced it to Russian literature. This theme continued to develop in some works of Pushkin and to a greater extent in Gogol's literary creations. During the era of Realism (second half of the nineteenth century), the Russian peasant played an even more significant role in the works of such famous writers as Grigorovich, Turgenev, Goncharov, Tolstoi, Nekrasov, Pisemsky and many others. In this thesis, we shall consider writers who belong predominantly to the realistic trend of Russian literature.

Although each writer represented peasant life in his own way, one can very basically divide them into two groups. One group endeavoured to stress the peasantry's attractive features (usually in a sentimental manner) while the other emphasized its baser sides. Stated more simply, the former tended to idealize the peasantry and the latter tended to de-idealize it.[1] Of course, in some

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[1]Some Russian literary critics believed that the peasantry was never really idealized by any Russian writer. A good example of this view is found in the article by A. M. Skabichevskii, "Muzhik v russkoi belletristike," Sochineniia (S.-Peterburg: Tipografiia Iu. N. Erlikh, 1903), t. 2, pp. 746-800.

cases it is difficult to place a particular writer in one or the other group since often he may depict some aspects of the peasantry negatively and others positively. This does not mean, however, that such a demarcation is virtually impossible. Generally speaking, writers such as young Turgenev, Goncharov, Grigorovich, Tolstoi, Nekrasov, young Gorky and others tended to idealize the peasantry. The group which de-idealized this class could include writers such as the mature Turgenev, Leskov, Pisemsky (to some extent), Chekhov, the mature Bunin and others.

In connection with the development of these two streams of thought in Russian literature, it should be mentioned that the early realists lived during serfdom, a time of social injustice for the peasantry. Moreover, following the emancipation of the serfs many of these writers were strongly influenced by the intelligentsia's popular beliefs which emphasized the attractive primitive characteristics of the peasantry. Consequently, these aspects of the peasantry were clearly reflected in the works of some early realists. In this thesis, Grigorovich's and Turgenev's early works are discussed as representatives of such literature. They have been selected because they best epitomize those Russian literary works which were based on the idealization of peasant life. Indeed, the basic principles and methods employed by Grigorovich and Turgenev served as examples for other Russian realists who wrote in the same manner.

As it has already been mentioned, several writers continued to idealize the peasantry throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Tolstoi, for example, created works which generally drew peasants most favourably. In the novel Voina i mir (War and Peace), the reader meets Karataev, a simple Russian peasant who consistently expressed his sympathetic and constructive ideas to others. According to Tolstoi's description, Karataev possessed virtually no negative features. Also, in Anna Karenina this writer vividly demonstrated the attractiveness of Russia's peasantry as seen through the eyes of Levin.

In connection with this type of literature, we could also mention Nekrasov whose poetry played a significant role in that stream of literature which portrayed the peasantry positively. Through his poetic creations, he expressed great faith in the country people and glorified their honourable characteristics.

One could mention many other writers who estemmed this class highly in their works. Yet, such writers, with the exception of Grigorovich and young Turgenev, are not discussed in this thesis because our interest is mainly centred on the development of the pessimistic outlook on the peasantry in Russian literature.

The exclusively negative attitude among Russia's men of letters had its roots in the failure of the so-called "going to the people" movement. As it is shown in the thesis, the intelligentsia's contact with the peasantry

caused many of its members to change their attitude from one of idealistic faith in the peasant folk to complete hopelessness. The intelligentsia's disappointment in the peasantry initiated a corresponding attitude of extreme pessimism towards this class in Russian literature.

Various Russian critics have dealt with the disenchantment in the peasantry and the consequent negative depiction of it as reflected in the works of those who wrote after the failure of the "going to the people" movement. Unfortunately, the critics have generally analyzed this attitude on the background of some particular period in Russian history. For example, in one of such articles (which is typical of many others), I. N. Ignatov discusses this question only in relation to Russian literature of the 1870's.[2] In another critical essay, A. M. Skabichevskii studies the matter of disappointment only in the works of one writer - namely, Gleb Uspenskii's.[3] One rarely finds a study which traces the whole development of

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[2]I. N. Ignatov, "Khudozhestvennaia literatura i kritika 70-kh godov" in D. N. Ovsianiko-Kulikovskii, ed., Istoriia russkoi literatury XIX v. (Moskva: Tipografiia Mir, 1910), t. 4, pp. 53-102.

[3]A. M. Skabichevskii, "Geroi vechnykh ozhidanii" in G. I. Uspenskii v russkoi kritike (Moskva, Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1961), pp. 141-164.

the negative attitude towards the peasantry in Russian literature from the time of the "going to the people" movement to the Russian Revolution of 1917. Thus, this thesis attempts to give a broader view of this phenomenon.

I have selected works by Turgenev, Leskov, Uspenskii, Chekhov and Bunin which present the peasantry negatively and in some cases, demonstrate the writers' disenchantment in it. One could, of course, include many other works but this would require more space. Some works of the above-mentioned writers have been chosen because they give the clearest portrayal of the peasant class.

In his mature years, Turgenev had an unfavourable impression of the peasants' way of life. This he reflected in one of his novels. Leskov pointed out some of the extremely conservative and unreasonable attitudes of these people. Uspenskii, as a populist, was enchanted by their primitiveness, although he also criticized their negative aspects. A consideration of Uspenskii's works is important because many Russian intellectuals who at one time expressed faith in the peasantry obviously formed their negative attitude after reading Uspenskii's works.[4] As an impressionist, Chekhov presented a most striking picture of the peasantry. Finally, Bunin's Derevnia (The Village) was probably the gloomiest representation of country life in Russian literary history.

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[4]G. V. Plekhanov, Izbrannye filosofskie proizvedeniia (Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1956), t. 1, p. 159.

CHAPTER I

THE HISTORICAL SETTING

It can well be said that one who studies Russian literature of the nineteenth and twentieth century actually studies Russian history. The fact of the matter is that one cannot study Russian literature objectively and appreciate it fully until he has carefully observed and seriously considered the historical setting upon which it developed. A comparative study of Russian and European history clearly reveals that Russia's political and social development was painstakingly slow. It is little wonder that the Russian intelligentsia as a whole became so engrossed in the problems of their society. Thus, Russia's men of letters also displayed a most serious concern for the social conditions and political developments in their country. New political and social idealogies played an important role not only in the development of the intelligentsia, but also the peasantry and newly-formed working class. By the beginning of the twentieth century, all these classes united to some extent to eradicate at least one historical tradition of Russia - tzarism, its absolutism and repression.

The period of Tzar Nicholas I (1825 - 1855) could be described as a time of political repression. It is a known fact that Nicholas openly stated his intention to

maintain the status quo. Kliuchevskii says of him:

> Nicholas took it upon himself not to change anything, neither to introduce anything new but only to maintain the existing order of things, to fill in the gaps, to continue the old methods. All this was to be done through practical legislation and without society's participation. As a matter of fact, all this was to be done solely through governmental means while dependence upon society would be suppressed....Thus, characteristic of the new reign was a conservative and bureaucratic mode of action.[1]

Nicholas introduced a few reforms which, in reality, served only to safeguard the existing order. For this reason, the army received much attention, legislation was codified (1833), the village replaced the volost' as an administrative unit, in order to promote greater efficiency of centralization. Nevertheless, it was precisely during Nicholas' reign that new ideas, whether political, social or even religious, grew in influence throughout Russian society.

One of the most important movements of Nicholas' time was Decembrism which culminated in the Decembrist Revolt (1825). During this time the spirit of revolution was prevalent not only in Russia, but also throughout various parts of Europe. It seems that Nicholas was in continual fear of revolution and he tenaciously held to the idea that he must save Russia from revolution and violence. Therefore, the tzar demanded the strictest

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[1] V. O. Kliuchevskii, Kurs russkoi istorii (Moskva: Sotsial'no-ekonomicheskoe izdatel'stvo, 1937), t. 5, p. 336. Here, and everywhere, quotations taken from Russian sources are given in my translation.

subordination and unquestionable obedience in his bureaucratic system.

Regarding the question of serfdom, Nicholas apparently understood that this institution should be replaced by a more reasonable and acceptable form sometime in the future. As early as 1826, he appointed a privy council to consider the question of serfdom and to suggest new policies to modify this age-old institution of Russia.

In the meantime, realizing that revolutions occur due to the influence of new political and social ideas, Nicholas took an attitude of intolerance to independent thought and, consequently, he rigorously suppressed any institution which tended to encourage the development of new philosophical, political or social trends. By reducing higher education to the minimum, his regime attempted to stifle the rise of new ideas in philosophy and literature. In order to successfully counteract the influx of western political and social ideas, Nicholas had a program of "Orthodoxy, autocracy and nationality" adopted as the official slogan of Russia during his reign.[2]

Throughout the nineteenth century in Russia, it was primarily the students and intellectuals that played a leading role in opposing tzarism and absolutism. Interestingly enough, it was during the reign of Nicholas I

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[2]M. T. Florinsky, Russia (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1955), Vol. II, p. 798.

that some of the first important student circles and intellectual societies were created and later became centres for revolutionary activity. In these early circles, such as those of Stankevich, Butashevich-Petrashevskii and others, theoretical questions concerning social and political themes came under flaming discussion. Furthermore, many young people of this period cared little to study under the tightly-controlled and restrictive educational system of their own country, and therefore, travelled abroad to study in Western universities. In Europe, the young Russian intellectuals eagerly feasted on the teachings of such European philosophers as Schelling and Hegel, whose influences were felt extensively in Russia. Upon their return to Russia, the young intellectuals rapidly infected others with their new Western ideas; they openly discussed the teachings of these philosophers in relation to the situation in Russia itself. As early as 1845, for example, a group of young authors often gathered around the publicist Butashevich-Petrashevskii to discuss such contemporary topics as abolition of serfdom, the enfranchisement of journalism and literature, and the reform of judicial procedure. The idea that revolution in Russia could only be successful when it received the support of the masses (which at that time, meant the peasantry) origi-

nated in the discussions of this group.[3]

Various young intellectuals who took part in the discussions of this group later became famous writers and critics. One of the most famous among them was V. S. Belinsky. One cannot stress too highly Belinsky's contribution to Russian literature of the nineteenth century. In essence, it was he who insisted that literature must become "realistic"[4] and be an expression of the highest human ideals and values. Therefore, he argued, writers must be committed men who would defend and save Russia from autocracy and Orthodoxy. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, greater stress was placed on the idea of "Art for Art's sake" in Russian literature. Although Belinsky saw merit in literature as artistic creation, he also believed that literature must become socially committed. As a result of Belinsky's strong influence, many Russian journals began to popularize and acquaint the public with the "progressive" ideas of the time which originated in Europe.

Following the death of Nicholas (1855), a great sense of mitigation from repression and a refreshing hope for the future developed throughout all levels of Russian society. Indeed, the new tzar, Alexander II, had no in-

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[3] L. Kochan, The Making of Modern Russia (Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1963), p. 155.

[4] V. G. Belinskii, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1953 - 1956), t. 6, p. 268.

terest in continuing many undesirable policies of repression practised by his father. This truly was the dawn of a new age for Russia, for she underwent most drastic changes under the reign of Alexander. The greatest change initiated by this liberal tzar was the abolition of serfdom. Addressing an assembly of Moscow nobility concerning his plans for the emancipation of the serfs, Alexander proclaimed on March 30, 1856:

> I consider it necessary to inform you that I have no intention to do this now, but, of course, you understand yourselves that the existing order of serfdom cannot remain unchanged. It is better to begin to abolish bondage from above than to wait for the time when it will begin to abolish itself spontaneously from below. I request, gentlemen, that you think over how this could be accomplished.[5]

In spite of the fierce struggle between opponents and supporters of serfdom, Alexander inaugurated a program to have the serfs released from bondage. It was Alexander's intention to grant personal freedom to all serfs. Therefore, by 1858, he had the nobility form local provincial committees to discuss questions on serfdom and to suggest the exact methods of peasant reform. In the early part of 1859, a central committee was formed to work out the final draft of the reform which finally came into effect on February 14, 1861.

The reform was rather complicated and we should mention only its most important points. Firstly, it

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[5]Quoted by Florinsky, Russia, Vol. II, p. 883.

stated that all state peasants obtained full personal freedom. Secondly, the landowner's peasants were given their own tract of land on which they were obligated to work for personal support and additional income. This group, which formed the majority of peasants, had to gradually pay their landowner for this land either with money or by means of manual labour. Thirdly, the reform stated that until a peasant had fully paid for his land, the landowner could exercise considerable jurisdiction over him.[6]

As a result, in general, the 1861 Reform failed to meet the expectations of the bureaucracy, nobility, intelligentsia and the peasantry itself; at all levels of society, great adjustments had to be made. The government overlooked many problems which became evident soon after the reform was adopted. In one sense, the peasant became a free citizen - he could marry as he wished, no longer could he be bought or sold according to the whims and wishes of his landowner, he could procure his own property and carry on economic trade with whom he willed. However, his price for such freedom was utter dependence upon his landowner for his economic and financial stability. Furthermore, he was tied to the land, and only at great price could he free himself from the landowner. The Reform made no provisions for those serfs who, during the time of serfdom,

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[6]Kochan, The Making of Modern Russia, pp. 167-170.

served as domestic servants in homes of landowners and nobles, possessing no land following the emancipation. Those peasants that did receive land usually received one fifth less land than they had during the time of serfdom. Many serfs attempted to escape the financial burden of a normal land allotment, choosing to take "beggarly allotments" of land.[7] Thus, the 1861 Reform failed in these and other areas, although credit should be given to Alexander II for taking it upon himself to change this institution.

Although Russia's economy continued to develop under Alexander II, Russia's masses, generally speaking, did not share in the rising standard prevailing among the European masses. The emancipation, for example, left many peasants landless or with very little land. Those who flocked to the cities had to work in the new developing factories where labour exploitation of women and children, various kinds of heavy payments, poor working and living conditions, low wages contributed to the low standard of living. It is true, however, that emancipation did give greater opportunities for the development of capitalism. A great influx of foreign capital began during the reign of Alexander II. The upsurge in railway building led to

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[7]A "beggarly allotment" was about one fourth less land than a normal allotment. The advantage, supposedly, was that it carried no financial burden in the form of redemptive dues. In most cases, a "beggarly allotment" led only to poverty, since it could hardly support an average peasant family.

the development of heavy industry and to a high degree of large-scale production.

At the outset of Alexander's reign, censorship was greatly abated at all levels of Russian society. This wave of relative freedom of expression initiated new trends in Russian journalism, literature and philosophy and gave rise to new political and social ideas. It was precisely during this time that Russia produced some of her best social thinkers, writers and literary critics; indeed, this was a time of mitigation for Russia's intelligentsia. Following the 1861 Reform, the intelligentsia became increasingly preoccupied with the problems of Russia's lower classes so that the final result of the polemics and intellectual ferment of the sixties and early seventies was a general social movement of serious consequence to Russia known as narodnichestvo (Populism).

Several important Russian personalities were very influential in formulating the main beliefs of the narodniki (populists). The ideas of Populism can be traced back to A. S. Khomiakov (1804 - 1860) who was the principal founder of Slavophilism, a doctrine which embraced Russia's Orthodox Church and her ancient traditions as the only hope against world destruction. Khomiakov's emphasis on collective activity among individuals united by mutual love, particularly within the framework of the Orthodox Church, led him to believe that Russia's rural community, the obshchina,

and the brotherhood of artisans, the artel', were both most desirable. "From Russia, because of its communal outlook, a purer stream of Christianity may flow," wrote Khomiakov.[8] For him, the obshchina, governed by its popular parliament, the mir, was not only a remnant of the past, but it contained the seeds of a new and higher social order where each member learned to depend on another within the community so that every community matter was controlled by public opinion as expressed through the village gathering.[9]

The Slavophiles used the terms narod (people) and narodnost' ("the spirit of the people") in a way which retained its appeal to the Russian intelligentsia. For the Slavophiles, "the spirit of the people" implied a new faith and hope in the social possibilities of the pure, undefiled simple folk of Russia and, in many cases, this led to outright idealization of this folk.

Two tenets of Slavophilism - faith in the simple folk and in their communal obshchiny - became a part of A. I. Hertzen's (1812 - 1870) doctrines of social change in Russia. The general failure of the 1848 revolutions for democracy in Europe impelled this one-time "westernizer" to turn his attention completely over to Russia as the world's final hope for democracy. Hertzen sincerely

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[8] Quoted by N. Zernov, Three Russian Prophets (London: S.C.M. Press Ltd., 1944), p. 73.

[9] Ibid., p. 72.

believed that Russia, with her strong peasants and small army of thinking intellectuals, was capable of achieving a revolution which would destroy ties of the nobility and state to the communal system and build a new socialistic society based exclusively on the village obshchina. The final thrust in the inception of this revolution lay in the hands of dedicated revolutionaries; concerning the latter he wrote:

> The people suffer much... [they - G.R.] feel passionately that there will soon be a change.... They are waiting not for books but for apostles - men who combine faith, will, conviction and energy; men who will never divorce themselves from them; but who act within them and in them, with a dedicated and steady spirit.[10]

Immediately following the emancipation of serfs, a new collection of loosely-bound groups, known as Zemlia i volia (Land and Liberty), came into being at different times throughout 1861. Each group had its individual characteristics depending upon its founder. The main weakness of these groups, however, was a general lack of central authority and, in actuality, they became nothing more than individual groups in communication with each other.[11] Nevertheless, there was merit in their existence; they were one of the first to encourage educated people to acquaint themselves with the peasants' plight following the emanci-

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[10] Quoted by F. Venturi, Roots of Revolution, trans. F. Haskell (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1960), p. 35.

[11] Ibid., p. 268.

pation. Moreover, they also expressed the desire to spread propaganda among the peasants. Although their theories were vaguely formulated, the members of Land and Liberty stressed the need for educated people to prepare themselves so that they could successfully guide the peasant movement in the future. Even though these early groups of Land and Liberty simply faded out of existence, some of their ideas continued to live in the minds of intellectuals.

In connection with the development of Populism in Russia, we should briefly mention a pamphlet signed Young Russia which was circulated during the summer of 1862.[12] In essence, it emphasized, and in the strongest terms, the need to destroy existing political and social relations in Russia and create a federal type of system:

> We demand that the present despotic regime be replaced by a federal-republic union of regions. Therefore, all power must pass into the hands of national and regional assemblies...[13]

Coupled with its extremism was the pamphlet's desire for definite action on the part of Russia's youth:

> O Youth, remember that it is from your ranks that the leaders of the people must come. You must become the vanguard of the movement. It is in you that the revolutionary party puts all its hope. Be ready for your glorious activity;

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[12]The true authors of this pamphlet are believed to have been a certain P. G. Zaichnevskii and a group of his friends who spread revolutionary ideas by means of literature. Zaichnevskii was a publisher.

[13]Quoted by B. P. Koz'min, Iz istorii revoliutsionnoi mysli v Rossii (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1961), p. 250.

> beware, do not be caught unawares! Prepare, and for this, meet together more often, organize circles, organize secret societies...[14]

The opening statement of Young Russia - "Russia is entering the revolutionary stage of its existence" - was more than an expression of dissatisfaction with the existing order of things, it was the expression of absolute faith in an impending and inevitable revolution in Russia. Its challenge was clear: the revolution could be realized only through successful revolutionary organization and actual revolutionary activity.

The year 1870 became important in the development of the populist movement when, despite all the misgivings of the Russian establishment, the censorship did allow the publication of a book, Historical Letters, written by P. Mirtov, the pseudonym of a celebrated Russian political exile, Peter Lavrovich Lavrov (1824 - 1900). Indeed, this book became the bible of the ever-growing Russian populist movement and because of its electrifying effect, the Russian government was forced to stop its publication within a year of its release. Interestingly enough, however, Historical Letters contained few, if any, distinctive economic and political proposals for change in the Russian society.

In keeping with his "subjective Approach," Lavrov came to the conclusion that each conscientious historian

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[14]Koz'min, Iz istorii..., pp. 253-254.

must, in all fairness, take into consideration the conscious needs and aspirations of men. Thus, the historian must base the evaluation of all historical processes on his own moral ideas. For this reason, in his own evaluation Lavrov concluded that throughout all eras of history, the majority, that is the lower classes of mankind, has paid for the support of the privileged position of the minority by its own strenuous toil. But, maintained Lavrov, the minority failed to bring benefit to the majority. He wrote:

> Mankind has paid dearly so that a few thinkers sitting in their studies could discuss its progress. It has paid dearly for a few little colleges where it has trained teachers who, to this day, have brought it little benefit.[15]

As a result, he argued, the minority incurred a debt to the majority. The debt could only be repaid by bringing progress to society at large.

Lavrov felt that the only people who possessed both the vision and opportunity to repay this debt were the "critically thinking" individuals of society.[16] Scarcely could the efforts of one such individual change

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[15] P. Lavrov, Historical Letters, trans. and introd. J. P. Scanlan (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), p. 135.

[16] By "critically thinking" individuals Lavrov meant those individuals to whom intellectual cultivation gave "a critical attitude toward everything that exists."

the institutions of society. For this reason, Lavrov believed that all critically thinking individuals must unite to form a strong well-disciplined party which could bring about the necessary alterations in society:

> ... [they - G. R.] must come together, unite, think together, act together, and organize something strong and single, but strong as a collective force, and single as an abstract unity. Their own individuality, which they have protected from the smothering influence of routine...must vanish in the common direction of thought and the common plan of action. They create an organism but they reduce themselves to organs within it. And they do so voluntarily.[17]

Lavrov believed that only such a strong unified body of critically thinking individuals could change the institutions of society in such a way that the majority would reap the benefits.

In addition to the effects of works such as Lavrov's Historical Letters, Russian Populism of 1873 and 1874 (in the form of the "going to the people" movement) grew out of the activities of groups of radical intelligentsia commonly known as the Chaikovtsy. The first groups were organized by Nicholas Chaikovskii and Mark Natanson in 1869 in Petersburg and other groups of Chaikovtsy appeared in various cities throughout Russia within the following year. All members of these circles were encouraged to engage in self-improvement by reading and as they turned to social questions, the Chaikovtsy were faced with the issue: what must be done regarding the

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[17]Lavrov, Historical Letters, pp. 174-175.

social situation in Russia? As it was previously agreed upon at a secret meeting in December 1871, the Chaikovtsy emphasized the need for social and economic rather than political reform. Furthermore, they also agreed to disseminate knowledge among the lower classes, particularly, the industrial workers. They set out to organize circles amongst the workers and to share knowledge and some revolutionary social ideas with them. Unfortunately, these contacts with the workers led to their discovery so that the government hastily ended their activities in 1873 by a series of arrests. The failure of the Chaikovtsy caused many populist youth to turn their attention to the peasantry and already by the summer of 1873, some populists decided to "go to the people."

One personality closely linked with the populist tradition in Russia during the seventies and eighties was N. K. Mikhailovsky(1842 - 1904).[18] Mikhailovsky was well known and revered highly by the radical intelligentsia for his views on the social development of Russia. In a series of articles called "What is Progress" (1869 - 1870), Mikhailovsky, in essence, called for a new belief in the intrinsic value of human personality and in the moral ideals of mankind.[19] As a member of the leading Russian

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[18] Mikhailovsky took active part in the secret policy-forming meeting of the Chaikovtsy in 1871. He had much influence in the decisions taken at that meeting.

[19] J. H. Billington, Mikhailovsky and Russian Populism (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), p. 36.

radical journal of the day, Otechestvennye zapiski (Fatherland's Notes), Mikhailovsky's ideas became the central beliefs of the populist movement - faith in human progress, intense moral idealism of the individual and opposition to the extremes of reaction and revolution.[20] In 1872, Mikhailovsky insisted that Russia could find its own path to socialism; he did not oppose industrial development as such, but his desire was to preserve the peculiarly Russian communal forms of ownership as exemplified by the peasants' obshchiny and the tradesmen's arteli. Economic development along these lines would differ from the European model, he argued, nevertheless, morally speaking, the communal economic system would encourage the development and the social betterment of each individual in society.

In connection with this, Mikhailovsky also played a prominent role in the propagation of the "narod as an idea" through the pages of Fatherland's Notes. During the period between 1872 - 1874, he encouraged all to "serve the Russian people and abjure every personal interest in the interest of the people."[21] Mikhailovsky considered Russia's backwardness as an advantage, since only she could fully understand the plight of the narod, that is, the

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[20]Billington, Mikhailovsky and Russian Populism, p. 53.

[21]Quoted by Billington, p. 90.

labouring classes of society.[22] This "idea of the narod" became a general phenomenon of history for Mikhailovsky. For him, true and lasting social change could only be best performed through the medium of the narod. It was at this point that Mikhailovsky repeated Lavrov's idea of responsibility to the people. Mikhailovsky felt that the privileged classes of Russian society were debtors to the peasantry and working class. However, together with this feeling of debt, he also developed feelings of guilt and penitence. We quote his own words regarding this:

> When the chasm of serfdom and all of the old order of Russian life was opened up clearly before us in all its terrifying ugliness there appeared in society an inescapable need for self-denunciation, for self-punishment, for penitence.[23]

Thus, Mikhailovsky introduced the descriptive term "repentant noble."

Inspired by the teachings and beliefs of Mikhailovsky and other populists, many of these "repentant nobles" and raznochintsy[24] spontaneously went into the villages and rural areas of Russia in a general movement known as khozhdenie v narod (going to the people). This movement involved some three thousand young intellectuals who left their careers and studies to engage in the work

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[22]Billington, Mikhailovsky and Russian Populism, p. 90.

[23]Quoted by Billington, p. 92.

[24]The raznochintsy were a group of Russia's intelligentsia which did not belong to the gentry of the nineteenth century.

of educating the peasantry whom they idealized so highly. Having no formal central organization, these young well-to-do intellectuals went amongst the peasants. They dressed like the peasants and took physical jobs so that they could work alongside the peasants and have an opportunity to educate them. Like a body of zealous missionaries, the young intellectuals preached the need for preserving and developing their communal obshchiny; they also stressed the need for passive resistance against the tzarist government. It is quite clear that the social programme of these young populists was nothing less than highly utopian in nature. Indeed, this movement caused many of its participants to share in the misery of the people, but at the same time, the populists also saw that the peasantry fell far short of their own idealized view of them. In most cases, the peasants only listened to these strange preachers of communal socialism, and in no case did any peasant group join in acts of protest which were of any serious consequence.

Although this was not a formally-organized exodus into rural Russia, the government, in a state of alarm, considered this movement outright revolution and, consequently, took steps to stifle it. By autumn of 1874, the police had arrested and imprisoned over one thousand five hundred participating populists, effectively killing the "going to the people" movement.

As it has been shown Russia's intelligentsia played an important role in the life of the country at this time. Concerning the intelligentsia and the "going to the people" movement, Ovsianiko-Kulikovskii concluded:

> ...[the intellectuals - G. R.] idealized the peasant to a higher degree, the illusions became more powerful and more obtrusive - the movement became clearly utopian in character. This was the pretext for the future tragedy which unfolded in the seventies and eighties...[25]

As the government's attempts to suppress the entire movement increased, reaction against the government also increased. In 1876, a new revolutionary party, called Land and Liberty, was organized.[26] Although the party's program for peasant reform was rather vague, its formation was significant because of its high degree of organization. Later, in 1879, this party subdivided into the Narodnaia volia (The People's Will) which consisted mostly of declared terrorists and the Chernyi peredel (The Black Redistribution) which sought to spread populist revolutionary ideas among the peasants. The People's Will concentrated its activities on the assassination of high officials and the tzar whom they finally killed in 1881, after no fewer than seven unsuccessful attempts.

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[25] D. N. Ovsianiko-Kulikovskii, Sobranie sochinenii (SPb.: Izdatel'stvo Obshchestvennaia pol'za, 1911), t. 8, pp. 97-98.

[26] Land and Liberty of the mid-seventies was not the same party as Land and Liberty of the early sixties. The group of 1876 simply used the same name.

The new tzar, Alexander III, through his chief spokesman, K. P. Pobedonostsev (1827 - 1907), declared a policy of reactionary repression which became a dominant feature of his whole reign. As if revenging the murder of his father, Alexander III carried out measures which smacked of the repressive days of Nicholas I. Alexander's program became so effective that the revolutionaries became rather disheartened and this temporarily abated their principles of terrorism and nihilism.

The works of men such as F. M. Dostoevsky (1821-1881) and V. S. Solovev (1853 - 1900) were being read with new interest at this time during which many members of Russia's intelligentsia were turning to religious questions more readily than social or political problems. L. V. Tolstoi's teaching against resistance by violence also became a popular slogan among some members of Russia's intelligentsia.

Under Alexander III, however, Russia experienced one of her most remarkable periods of economic growth; with the aid of foreign capital heavy industry developed at an unbelievable rate. Unfortunately, as Russia was being industrialized, living and working conditions continued to worsen for the new class of industrial workers and it seemed that the government continually refused to provide any protective legislation against economic exploitation of them. Thus, this situation only added "fuel

to the fire" so that once again the intelligentsia began to concern itself with the country's social and political life. As the working class became a more prominent entity in Russian society, a new dispute developed within the ranks of the intelligentsia which actually came out into the open only after the death of Alexander III in 1894. The populist-inspired members who believed that Russia could escape capitalism through the means of a socialist system based upon the commune sharply disagreed with the growing ranks of marxists who felt that Russia was actually developing into a typically European capitalistic country. Furthermore, the marxists considered that it was the working proletariat that could create a successful revolution.

Under the new tzar, Nicholas II (1894 - 1917), the old policy of repression was not immediately abated. But with every succeeding year labour strikes and peasant revolts increased. With the relaxation of governmental control within the society, new political parties began to appear throughout Russia. It was during these years that the two main leftist parties came into being: the Social Democratic Labour Party (1898) and the Social Revolutionary Party (1900). Both parties shared the idea that the political and social conditions of Russia necessitated a revolution which would result in the creation of a socialistic system. However, where the Social Demo-

crats insisted that revolution would come through the working proletariat, the Social Revolutionaries insisted that revolution must be carried out under a union of all anti-bourgeois forces including the intelligentsia, working proletariat, peasantry and liberals. Furthermore, just as the first populists of the seventies believed that Russia could create its own socialistic system based on the commune, so the Social Revolutionaries also continued to stress this point.

As the working class increased, some of the newly-organized revolutionary groups sought to unite the workers into larger coercive bodies which could exert greater pressure on the government by means of strikes. The growing general protest against the tzarist regime became so intense that in 1905 a mass of about one hundred fifty thousand people marched on the Winter Palace in an act of protest and demanded greater political changes. The authorities refused to accept these demands and broke into the defenseless procession, killing hundreds.

Although three dumas (parliaments) were called by the tzar to discuss problems and grievances, there were no positive results. The final blow to tzarism came in 1917. When news spread that the Russian armies of World War I failed miserably, the sentiment of the masses turned against the tzar. Indeed, the long-awaited revolution finally came to Russia.

CHAPTER II

THE IDEALIZATION OF THE PEASANTRY

In Russia's literary history, the so-called Gogol Naturalistic School gave rise to the Realistic School; more specifically, the realistic trend dawned upon Russia's literary scene sometime during the middle of the 1840's and continued to dominate it until the turn of the next century.[1] Although the Russian realists introduced many new features which were not characteristic of Gogol's School, they continued to centre their interest on the lower classes of society. With this interest in the lower classes came also the interest in the peasant and village themes within certain literary circles. One result of this new concern among men of letters was that in 1846 and in 1847 respectively, Dmitrii Vasilevich Grigorovich (1822 - 1899) published two literary works, Derevnia (The Village) and Anton Goremyka, which were based exclusively on the peasant and village themes. Furthermore, in 1847, another young writer, Ivan Sergeevich Turgenev (1818 - 1899), began publishing a series of short stories based on Russia's rural life which finally came out in

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[1]D. S. Mirsky, A History of Russian Literature, ed. F. J. Whitfield (London, New York: Knopf, 1964), p. 169.

book form in 1852 under the title Zapiski okhotnika (A Sportsman's Notebook). We must remember that it was Russia's intelligentsia which initially began to express a deep concern for the conditions created by the institution of serfdom, and by the forties a strong mood of sentimentality toward Russia's serfs prevailed among many intellectuals. It may be said that the above mentioned literary works represent this general feeling which was widespread within the ranks of Russia's intelligentsia before the 1861 Reform. Grigorovich and Turgenev both idealized the peasant in their works. Thus, their works shall serve as examples of such Russian literature.

We shall begin with Grigorovich's The Village which is the life story of a poor orphan peasant girl, Akulina, who is raised in the midst of a family which bestows no love on her and makes life very difficult for her. During her short life, Akulina suffers greatly when her lord forces her to marry a man who does not love her. Akulina has only one person whom she loves and who reciprocates this love - her daughter. The brutality of her husband, her strenuous labour and the cruel treatment from her "in-laws" all combine to bring about her premature death.

Throughout the whole story, Grigorovich emphasizes

the very human aspects of Akulina. Coupled with this, he strives to capitalize on her miserable condition so that the reader's own feelings will be aroused and he will be overcome by a sense of compassion for Akulina. Although she is a simple peasant girl, it is evident that as any other human being, she is capable of feeling and giving love. She also possesses the ability to think intelligently. In spite of common belief that only cultured people could appreciate beauty in Nature, the author shows that Akulina also enjoys this aspect of life:

> She especially liked to take her cattle into the thick aspen grove....She felt inexpressibly light, joyful and free while sitting here from morning until evening...Nature simply captivated her.[2]

Furthermore, Akulina demonstrates another basic human trait - she is capable of sorrow and grief:

> ...not one of them [the village women - G. R.] noticed - nor could they notice, of course, - those fine signs of heartfelt sorrow, that silent despair...which appeared during that whole time in every line of her face, in every movement of the orphan.[3]

Nevertheless, despite her life of suffering, especially with her husband, Akulina realizes her inability to change circumstances in any way and displays great courage and strength of character:

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[2]D. V. Grigorovich, Izbrannye proizvedeniia (Moskva, Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literaturi, 1959), p. 33.

[3]Ibid., p. 55.

> Seeing that nothing worked - neither submissiveness, nor meekness, nor toil - she decided to do things not only in spite of her husband, but also in spite of all her relatives....Having noticed that their malice increased as a result of her indifference, Akulina tried to do her best to appear even more calm and indifferent before them.[4]

As Grigorovich portrays Akulina's life, he carefully describes only her positive characteristics, leaving out negative features; consequently, Akulina becomes an idealized hero.

Throughout the whole story, the reader lives through deeply moving scenes in which the author's sentimentalism becomes most extreme, this would include such scenes as Akulina's pitiful birth which resulted in her mother's death, the cruelty of village life, Akulina's loneliness, her life with a brutal husband and so forth. This mood is very strong in a particular scene where the author describes Akulina's reaction when she happens to discover the grave of her mother:

> For a long time she stood frozen to the spot, tears streamed down her pale cheeks and dropped onto her hands, breast and shirt....Finally, Akulina's grief burst out and seemed to crush her ...a painful sob burst from her breast; she came down and hit the gaunt mound with her chest. Grasping it convulsively, she just stayed on it without any movement...[5]

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[4]Grigorovich, Izbrannye proizvedeniia, p. 73.

[5]Ibid., p. 43.

As one reads this and other passages like it, he is overcome by a great sense of sympathetic and heartfelt compassion for Akulina who must pass through life in such tribulation and bitterness.

This same element of extreme sentimentalism prevails throughout Grigorovich's next literary work, Anton Goremyka. In this story, the main hero, Anton, once again is a common peasant who lives a life of utter poverty and want. Anton's condition worsens when his master orders him to pay all his debts and long-overdue taxes at a time when Anton is found with no money at hand. Consequently, he can do nothing but sell one of his dearest possessions, his horse, in order to obtain the necessary funds to repay his debts. During the first day at the market, Anton fails to sell his horse, but in the meantime, he meets a would-be friend who leads him to an inn for the night. Unfortunately, his new friend, together with the innkeeper, bring Anton to a state of drunkenness and while he sleeps these cunning men steal his horse. The following morning, he discovers, to his utter horror, that his horse has been stolen and with even greater sorrow, he sets out to find it. Much to his disappointment, after searching for many days, Anton comes to the realization that he will probably never find his beloved possession. Dejected and broken-hearted, he meets a group of robbers who invite him to celebrate their most recent successful highway robbery. As they

celebrate in a nearby tavern, the robbers are recognized by the one who had been robbed and they are taken into custody. Although innocent, Anton is falsely accused and sentenced to exile.

Indeed, the story of Anton's experiences is nothing short of real tragedy which results from the evil practices of men who show no concern for a commoner such as him. The reader's deepest feelings of compassion are aroused on Anton's behalf. Once Belinsky expressed this very view after he had read Anton Gormeyka. He wrote the following to a friend:

> ...in spite of the fact that Anton is a simple peasant, certainly not a shrewd or cunning one, he is a tragic character in the fullest sense of the word. This is a tragic story and when one reads it, his mind is overcome by sad and serious thoughts.[6]

Although Anton is depicted as an innocent and simple peasant, the author emphasizes the fact that he actually possesses some very attractive moral characteristics. The impression created by Grigorovich is that Anton possesses a personality which is "pure" and untainted by the evils of civilization. In the story, a village peasant who personally knows Anton says of him:

> He was so kind...simple...It used to be that when he lived well, he was prepared to respect everyone,

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[6] Belinskii, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii, t. 10, p. 347.

> he's a simple peasant....It was because of his simplicity and goodness that he suffered even more ...he was a good old soul...[7]

It is interesting to notice that Grigorovich considers only the positive features of Anton's personality and any negative traits that Anton might have possessed are simply not discussed. Because of this very fact, Anton, like Akulina, becomes an idealized hero, an idealized Russian peasant. Of course, we must understand that Anton's simplicity and docility do not lessen the idealized position given to him by the author in any way.

In general, one can conclude that by taking a humanistic and extremely sentimental attitude towards his heroes, Grigorovich succeeded in creating tragic heroes who aroused the strongest feelings of sympathy and compassion in the minds of Russian readers during the forties. The author, as it were, depicted the lives of Akulina and Anton as representative of the lives of many such poor peasants who were held in bondage and who were continually forced to suffer the cruelty of serfdom. From a social point of view, The Village and Anton Goremyka became a form of literary protest against the injustices which were practised during the time of serfdom in Russia.

The social impact of Grigorovich's works was great, but the culminative effect of Turgenev's series of short

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[7]Grigorovich, Izbrannye proizvedeniia,p. 140.

stories on Russian rural life was even greater when they finally came out in book form in 1852. Turgenev's A Sportsman's Notebook consists of over twenty short stories. Each story is an account or "sketch" of the narrator's experiences as a hunter when he wandered from place to place across the Russian steppe in search of game. Some sketches describe scenery while others describe some interesting personality whom the hunter happens to meet. Thus, throughout the whole book, the reader has occasion to acquaint himself with various personalities of rural Russia, rich and poor peasants, house servants, estate managers, landlords and landowners.

Like Grigorovich, Turgenev also idealizes the peasant, although Turgenev does this by emphasizing the humanity of the peasant, his imaginativeness, his ingenuity and intelligence and his sense of dignity. Grigorovich's idealization of the peasant differs from Turgenev's in the fact that Grigorovich describes the peasant much like the Russian sentimentalists had already done at the end of the eighteenth century. In both The Village and Anton Goremyka the author strongly stresses the peasants' deepest emotions of sorrow and distress. As one reads these stories, one feels that Grigorovich actually tries to bring the reader to tears. It is true that both writers arouse within the reader deep feelings

of compassion for the peasant, but where Grigorovich portrays the peasant basically in the manner of sentimentalism, Turgenev does this by utilizing more realistic methods. Thus, although one can find some elements of sentimentalism in A Sportsman's Notebook, Turgenev, as a "truer" realist, creates heroes who are more typical of Russian people than the peasant heroes created by Grigorovich.

In one of his essays on the peasant in Russian literature, the Russian literary critic A. M. Skabichevskii expressed the view that A Sportsman's Notebook (particularly the first story of this collection entitled Khor and Kalinych) left a very powerful impression upon the Russian public because of its objectivity.[8] This does not mean, however, that Turgenev's peasants are not idealized at all. Even though Turgenev was quick to point out certain negative features of the Russian peasants, he directed most of his attention towards their positive human side.

A Sportsman's Notebook was written during the period of serfdom and therefore, one would naturally expect that the author would portray some of the injustices which were practised during this time. In the story Raspberry Water, the narrator meets a tired peasant named Vlas who explains that his son has died so that he can no longer manage to pay his rent. In view of such an unfor-

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[8] Skabichevskii, Sochineniia, t. 2, p. 753.

tunate event, Vlas decided to travel many miles in order that he might plead his case before the landowner. Unfortunately, the landowner threw this poor peasant out without giving the slightest consideration of his plea. It seems that outwardly Vlas experiences no sense of regret or sadness as he relates his story. But the observant narrator is quick to notice that, in actual fact, the opposite is true. Indeed, this sorrowful peasant is undergoing much mental and spiritual torment:

> The peasant told us the whole story with a grin, as if talking about someone else; but in his little shrunken eyes a tear hovered, and his lips twitched.[9]

Turgenev shows that all this anguish has been brought upon the innocent peasant as a result of the unjust practices of a landowner who enjoyed complete jurisdiction over him.

It has generally been accepted that Turgenev's best short story in A Sportsman's Notebook is Khor and Kalinych which first appeared in 1847. This is simply a comparative analysis of two types of Russian peasants, one named Khor who is described as a "positive, practical fellow, an administrator, a rationalist" and Kalinych who is described as "an idealist, romantic, an enthusiast and dreamer." These two are exact opposites. Khor is a representative of Russia's intelligent peasant whose practicality and rationalism make him one of the richest peasants in his

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[9] I. Turgenev, A Sportsman's Notebook, trans. C. and N. Hepburn (London: The Book Society, 1959), p. 40.

region. On the other hand, Kalinych is a representative of the idealistic and romantic Russian peasant whose interest is primarily centered on the things of Nature. The polarity of these two characters is depicted very clearly in the following passage from the story:

> Khor understood reality, that is to say, he knew how to get on in the world, how to put money aside, and keep on good terms with the master and the other powers that be; Kalinych went about in plaited shoes and lived from hand to mouth.... Khor saw right through Mr. Polutykin [the landowner - G. R.] ; Kalinych, on the other hand, idealized him....Khor spoke little, chuckled, and thought things out for himself; Kalinych expressed himself with warmth, although he was not one of your nightingales of eloquence, like some smart fellows of the artisan class.[10]

Thus, we see that Turgenev strove to depict every type of Russian peasant of his time and therefore, he saw them not only as ignorant, unwitting, simple creatures, but also as intelligent, astute and discerning men.

In several stories, he discloses and emphasizes the fact that simple Russian peasants demonstrated deeply-rooted emotions and feelings of love and passion. For example, in The Rendezvous, the story is told of a naive and gentle peasant girl, Akulina, who patiently awaits her lover, a rough, unsympathetic and spoiled rich master. In the course of their conservation he casually informs

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[10]Turgenev, A Sportsman's Notebook, pp. 11-12.

Akulina that he plans to leave for another town on the following day. This news startles her. Viktor Aleksandrych (her lover) cannot understand why his decision to leave grieves her so deeply and in a fit of anger and disgust, he rudely takes leave of her without giving any words of consolation. As the reader observes this most unfortunate scene a powerful sense of sympathy wells up within him on behalf of this poor peasant girl. Turgenev depicts Akulina's deepest feelings very effectively:

> In her sad glance there was so much tender devotion, reverant submissiveness and love. She was afraid of him, she didn't dare cry, she was saying goodbye to him, admiring him for the last time: while he lay, sprawling like a sultan, and suffered her adoration with magnanimous patience and condescension....her whole soul bared itself trustfully, passionately, to him, and strove in all humility to approach him...[11]

Thus, Turgenev humanizes this simple peasant girl by showing that she possesses human qualities which demonstrate true humility, affection, dedication and loyalty.

In several other stories, Turgenev shows that the peasant possesses the ability to appreciate Art and Nature as any other human being. A good example of this is provided in the short story The Singers where Turgenev demonstrates that Russia's peasantry is not only capable of appreciating good music, but it also is capable of produc-

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[11]Turgenev, A Sportsman's Notebook, pp. 271-272.

ing artists of merit. In this story, a "huckster" and a peasant engage in a singing competition before a gathering of local peasants in a tavern. The huckster sang first. He sang well but his singing seemed to lack "the support of a choir." However, the peasant's singing far exceeded the performance of the huckster; the narrator admits that rarely had he heard a voice more pleasant than the voice of this lowly Russian peasant:

> Seldom, I confess, have I heard such a voice; it was somewhat worn and had a sort of cracked ring; at first it had even a certain suggestion of the morbid; but it also held a deep, unsimulated passion, and youth, and strength, and sweetness, and a deliciously detached note of melancholy. The truthful, fervent Russian soul rang and breathed in it and fairly caught at your heart, caught straight at your Russian heartstrings. The song developed, went flowing on.[12]

So effective was Yasha's (the peasant) singing that it not only touched the narrator's own soul, but it also deeply stirred the hearts of the peasants who sat motionlessly and listened with tears flowing down their cheeks. The narrator renders this most moving scene with the following words:

> I could feel tears welling up in my heart and rising into my eyes; dull, muffled sobs suddenly fell on my ears...I looked around - the tapster's wife was weeping as she leant her breast against the window. Yasha threw her a quick glance and his song flowed on still more sonorously and sweetly than before. Nikolai Ivanich looked down, Blinker turned away; Muddlehead, quite overcome by emotion, stood with his mouth stupidly

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[12]Turgenev, A Sportsman's Notebook, p. 244.

> gaping; the little grey peasant was quietly whimpering in his corner and shaking his head and muttering away bitterly to himself; down the iron face of Wild Master, from under his deep overhanging brows, slowly rolled a heavy tear...[13]

One could hardly believe that such soul-stirring and rapturous power could be possessed by such a commonplace Russian peasant. Yet, it was this pure and simple Yasha who demonstrated that he could capture the hearts of his listeners. Furthermore, it is with interest that we notice the reaction of the audience which consisted mainly of local simple and "uncultured" Russian peasants. They, too, possessed the ability to appreciate fine music. In this story, Turgenev attempts to prove that the Russian peasant can be brought to a sensation of ardent ecstacy by rapturous artistic performance.

Throughout A Sportsman's Notebook the author considers his peasant heroes with warmth and affection; consequently, he sees them as men who are humble, submissive, honourable, affectionate, talented, stoical and energetic. In other words, Turgenev centers most of his attention on the peasant's positive and favourable features in this group of short stories.

The author's sympathetic treatment of the peasants stems from his mother's estate where he was a witness of the cruelty and evil injustices which were practised by his whimsical mother on the estate peasantry. This was a time of servitude and bondage for the Russian peasantry

and as young Turgenev was faced with the suffering of these simple folk he developed a hatred for the whole system which gave license to such cruelty.

Turgenev left his homeland in January of 1847 and lived in the West for the next three and a half years during which time he wrote the majority of short stories in A Sportsman's Notebook. In connection with his trip to the West and the writing of A Sportsman's Notebook, he later wrote:

> I had to pull away from my enemy so that I could attack it more vigorously from afar off. That enemy had definite form in my view; that enemy was serfdom. I gathered and concentrated all my powers against that name which I swore never to accept and which I decided to fight to the very end...[14]

Thus, as a direct result of this hatred, Turgenev was led to idealize his peasant heroes in A Sportsman's Notebook. This idealization actually represents the author's attempt to defend Russia's suffering peasantry. By the writing of this book, Turgenev hoped to convince the Russian establishment of the need to eradicate serfdom and all that it stood for. This he succeeded in doing.

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[14]I. S. Turgenev, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem (Moskva, Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1963), t. 4, p. 498.

CHAPTER III

THE DISAPPOINTMENT IN THE PEASANTRY

It might be recalled that between the 1861 Reform and the "going to the people" movement (1873 - 1874), the Russian intelligentsia expressed great hope in the lower classes of Russian society. That is, the influence of populist thinking became so widespread that many Russian intellectuals continued to idealize the peasantry, much like Turgenev and Grigorovich idealized them in their literary works. However, as we have already seen, the spontaneous populist pilgrimages into rural Russia brought the intelligentsia face to face with the peasant's true nature. In most cases, the peasants differed markedly from the intelligentsia's view of them as basically faultless. Following the failure of the populist movements, a new trend was set into motion which continued to grow in subsequent years. Within the ranks of Russia's intelligentsia there was a feeling of disappointment in the peasantry. This same tendency crept into the works of certain major Russian writers, including Turgenev whose view on the peasantry changed drastically in his later life.[1]

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[1]There was a group of Russian writers, commonly known as "populists-writers," who continually idealized the peasantry in their literary works. All of these writers attained little prominence in Russian literature with the exception of Gleb Uspenskii who will be discussed later in this thesis.

The failure of the 1861 Reform and the populist movements of the seventies caused Turgenev to experience utter disappointment in the peasants whom he knew so well. In 1876, Turgenev completed a major novel, Nov' (Virgin Soil), which described the failure of the "going to the people" movement and also portrayed the role played by the peasantry during the time of this movement.

During the seventies, Turgenev spent most of his time in France, occasionally returning to his native Russia. Such practice caused Turgenev to lose much of his former contact with the ever-changing life of the country. Many critics of Turgenev's works admitted that this fact became clearly evident in some of his last literary compositions including Virgin Soil. For example, the populist critic N. K. Mikhailovsky considered that many heroes created by Turgenev failed to be "typical" representatives of Russian society. He expressed the view that Nezhdanov, the central hero of Virgin Soil, was simply the old Turgenevian "superfluous man" of the fifties and sixties.[2] According to his understanding, the basic reason for such error was that Turgenev had lost vital contact with Russian society.[3]

While in France, Turgenev happened to meet several Russian emigres who had escaped the repression and possible

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[2]N. K. Mikhailovskii, Sochineniia (SPb.: Russkoe bogatstvo, 1896 - 1897), t. 3, pp. 899-900.

[3]Ibid., p. 891.

imprisonment of the tzarist regime following the unsuccessful populist movements. It was through them, therefore, that Turgenev attempted to acquaint himself with the history of Populism. Although Tugenev's knowledge of the movement was limited, it is interesting to note that P. L. Lavrov agreed that Turgenev had perceived two very important features of Populism in his composition: the lack of understanding which developed between the peasantry and the agitators, and the "hamletism" of the agitators, that is, their lack of decisive action.[4]

The novel is centered around the life of a young populist, Nezhdanov, who happened to receive a job as a tutor for the son of a liberal-minded official Sipiagin. While residing at Sipiagin's estate, Nezhdanov met Sipiagin's neice, Marianna with whom he developed a strong friendship. Seeing that Nezhdanov desired to sincerely give up his life for the cause of revolution and social change in Russia on behalf of the people, Marianna decided to join him in this struggle. After falling into the disgraces of Sipiagin and his wife, Nezhdanov and Marianna decided to leave the estate together and give up their lives for "the cause" by working among the simple folk in the rural areas. Here, they endeavoured "to simplify" themselves, that is, they attempted to learn the ways of the peasant and share in

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[4]N. Bogoslovskii, Turgenev (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo TsK VLKSM Molodaia gvardiia, 1964), p. 375.

their work. Nezhdanov made a few feeble attempts to inspire the peasants to join him in revolt against the local authorities but met with complete failure. This failure made him doubt the validity of "the cause" and after some contemplation, he came to the conclusion that he never really believed in it. Overcome by a sense of complete failure and frustration, he took his own life.

On the other hand, Turgenev depicted Marianna as a representative of a true revolutionary who possessed strong positive convictions regarding Russia's future social changes. Once she realized that Nazhdanov had lost faith in "the cause," she turned her attention to another individual by the name of Solomin, a manager of a local factory, whom she later married.

Solomin was depicted as a positive and decisive hero who thought rationally and clearly. He sympathized with the revolutionaries and their cause but disagreed with their methods. He believed that social changes could be brought about through gradual constitutional reform rather than through revolt.

Turgenev portrayed the personal development of various young populists who unselfishly gave their lives for the service of the people. They firmly believed that the peasantry would cooperate with them to change the face

of Russia's society which, they felt, was steeped in great social inequality and injustice. Turgenev depicted the enthusiastic sincerity of these young populists such as Marianna who was overcome by an earnest and zealous longing to render service to the common peasants as an act of repayment for their toil which had granted her a privileged social position. At one point in her life, Marianna stood before Nezhdanov and gravely proclaimed:

> And this means...that I am at your disposal, and I want to be of use to your cause, that I am ready to do anything that is wanted, to go where I am ordered...[5]

Indeed, Turgenev effectively showed how intense was Marianna's concern, dedication and enthusiasm in her decision to serve the underprivileged people of Russia.

At the same time, through the writing of Virgin Soil, Turgenev also expressed his disappointment in the Russian populist movement as a whole. In this work, he portrayed the confrontation which took place between two opposite classes of society - the intelligentsia and the peasantry. What was disappointing to him was that both sides failed to understand each other. Taken a step further, we may conclude that Turgenev's real disappointment was in the peasantry.

Turgenev's view of Russia's peasantry during the period of the "going to the people" movement was most

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[5] I. Turgenev, Virgin Soil, trans. C. Garnett (New York: Grove Press, no date given), p. 102.

clearly expounded by his positive hero, Solomin.[6] This son of a former deacon was well acquainted with the detestable conditions of Russia's peasantry. Yet, he was an individual who "did not believe that revolution was at hand in Russia."[7] Why? Because he realized that the peasantry stood aloof from the revolutionary movement so that one could do very little in his attempt to instill in them ideas of revolution and social change. At one point in the novel, Solomin stated that Russia's lower classes were "the meekest set of people" and therefore, they could hardly be depended upon to support the populists in activities which would foster social change.[8] When Solomin was specifically asked about the trustworthiness of the peasantry in the revolutionary movement, he impetuously answered:

> "The peasants? There are pretty many of the close-fisted, money-lending sort among them now, and every year there'll be more; but they only know their own interest; the rest are sheep, blind and ignorant."[9]

There is one basic difference between the method used to depict the peasantry in A Sportsman's Notebook and Virgin Soil. In the former, Turgenev usually centres his

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[6]Bogoslovskii, Turgenev, pp. 373-374.

[7]Turgenev, Virgin Soil, p. 109.

[8]Ibid., p. 110.

[9]Ibid.

attention on an individual peasant, while in the latter, it is the peasant mob which becomes predominant. Moreover, in all scenes of Virgin Soil during which the peasant village masses play an important role, the author seems to depict only the gloomier sides of these senseless mobs so that the reader's impression of them is one of poignant pessimism and utter hopelessness. In a letter to a friend, Turgenev himself had to admit that in this story, he focussed his attention on the peasantry's "cruel and harsh side with which they [the peasants - G. R.] confronted the Nezhdanov's and the Markelov's."[10]

Markelov, a small landowner who displayed a sincere desire to improve the standard of living for the peasants of his own estate, attempted to instill within them the need to practise principles of cooperative activity amongst themselves. Unfortunately, the peasants misinterpreted the whole purpose of his attempts and their only demand was for more land. Deeply dejected, Markelov later related his experience with them to Nezhdanov:

> "However you talk to these people, they can't understand anything, and they won't carry out instructions....They positively don't understand Russian. The word 'part' they know well enough... but 'participation'....What is participation? They can't understand. And yet it's a Russian word, too, damn it!"[11]

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[10]Turgenev, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem, t. 12, p. 39.

[11]Turgenev, Virgin Soil, p. 78.

Having understood that any further attempts to educate his own peasants would undoubtedly end in failure, Markelov turned his attention to other peasant groups. When news came that a series of peasant uprisings had begun in a town nearby, Markelov quickly drove to the scene of action in order that he might assist the group of revolting peasants. However, instead of following him, the group betrayed him and cruelly turned him over to the local police. Turgenev described Markelov's feeling of extreme disappointment in the peasants who betrayed him:

> And Markelov's head sank on his breast. There was great confusion in his soul, quiet as he was outwardly. More than all he was fretted and tortured by the thought that he had been betrayed by none other than Eremy of Boloplyok! Eremy, in whom he had believed so blindly! That Menely, the Sulker, had not followed him, had not really surprised him...Menely had been drunk and was frightened. But, Eremy! To Markelov, Eremy was a sort of personification of the Russian peasantry...[12]

Indeed, it seemed that each peasant of that mob had personally insulted this sincere revolutionary whose real intention was to help the poor and oppressed of Russia.

It was not long after that Nezhdanov also had to pass through embittering experiences which brought about that same reaction of utter disappointment in the peasantry. While he was still on Sipiagin's estate, Nezhdanov experienced much difficulty in acquainting himself with the local factory workers and peasants. He only succeeded in exchanging a few insignificant words with a drunken peasant; a second peasant

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[12]Turgenev, Virgin Soil, p. 275.

whom he met, turned out to be nothing more than a "wretched outcast." Even the local factory workers showed no promise according to Nezhdanov's impression of them. As a result of these early contacts with the lower stratum of Russian society, Nezhdanov had to confess that "between him and the country people there was a gulf over which he could not cross."[13] Once Nezhdanov visited a local factory which utilized peasant labour and through his eyes we see that the factory's unceasing rattle of machines, perpetual ringing of bells, constant shrill of whistles and bustle of the employees indicated that the factory flourished with activity. Yet in the midst of such movement, Nezhdanov saw something that disturbed him very much; it was the tremendous filth of this place:

> ...there was not even any trace of cleanliness to be observed in anything anywhere; on the contrary, on all sides one was impressed by neglect, filth, grime.[14]

This filth so surprised Nezhdanov that he could hardly accept the fact that such disorder was a possibility within a Russian factory. Markelov, however, knowing Russian life very well, challenged Nezhdanov's disappointment by saying: "It isn't disorder, it's the Russian

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[13]Turgenev, Virgin Soil, p. 94.

[14]Ibid., p. 106.

sluttishness."[15] Thus, through Nezhdanov's experience at the factory, Turgenev seemed to imply that one could hardly hope to do anything positive together with such a careless and negligent people as the Russian peasantry.

Throughout Virgin Soil, Turgenev clearly indicates his feeling of strong aversion for the peasantry's continual preoccupation with drink by depicting this aspect of their nature in an extremely negative manner. Through the eyes of Nezhdanov, the author presents one such scene in which the peasant mob is depicted as "slaves to drink." As Nezhdanov and Markelov drive through a town on a Saturday night, Nezhdanov is startled to see that all the taverns are overcrowded with multitudes of drunken people hoarsely shouting and singing at the top of their voices. The scene is most disgusting to him:

> Hoarse voices broke from the tavern, drunken songs, and the nasal notes of the concertina; from doors suddenly opened streamed the filthy warmth, the acrid smell of alcohol, the red glare of lights.... a ragged, unbelted peasant in a big winter cap... would come out of a tavern...stay motionless, feebly fumbling and moving his hands as though looking for something; or a wasted factory-hand, his cap awry, and his cotton shirt flying open, would take irresolute steps, barefoot - his boots having remained in the tavern - stop short, scratching his spine, and, with a sudden groan, go back again.[16]

No less disgusting is a later scene in which Nezhdanov attempts to arouse the peasant mob to revolt against the

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[15]Turgenev, Virgin Soil, p. 106.

[16]Ibid., p. 69.

establishment. Instead of heeding Nezhdanov's call to action, the peasants force this young populist to join them in their tavern. The following repelling scene takes place:

> He dragged Nezhdanov into the tavern; the rest of the crowd trooped in after them. "Miheitch!" bawled the young giant, "look sharp! two penn'-orth! My favourite tap! I'm treating a friend! ...Drink!" he said turning to Nezhdanov, and handing him a full heavy glass, moist all over the outside as though perspiring, "drink - if you've really any feeling for the likes of us!" "Drink!" rose a noisy chorus around.[17]

Fearing the possible consequences of disobedience to the demands of this mad mob, Nezhdanov unwillingly fulfills their wishes. Thus, here Turgenev shows that drink greatly affects the peasantry and consequently, it prevents this class from worthwhile activity.

We have seen that Turgenev's attitude toward Russia's peasantry had changed drastically between the time of A Sportsman's Notebook and Virgin Soil. In the former, the author idealized his peasant heroes depicting them as talented, strong and clever individuals. In the latter, the author expressed his disappointment in the peasantry by focusing his attention on their continual state of drunkenness, their cruelty, filthiness and ignorance. Turgenev's general attitude to the peasantry during the writing of Virgin Soil was well summarized by one of

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[17]Turgenev, Virgin Soil, p. 69.

Nezhdanov's poetic creations called "Sleep":

> Dead asleep are the peasants; asleep, they reap and plough;
> They thresh asleep; the father sleeps, the mother and children
> All are asleep! He that flogs is asleep, and he too that is flogged!
> Only the Tsar's gin-shop never closes an eye;
> And grasping tight her pot of gin,
> Her brow on the pole and her heels on the Caucasus,
> Lies in interminable sleep our country, holy Russia![18]

One literary critic, writing on the peasant theme in Turgenev's literary works, concluded his article with the following words:

> Regarding the common land-working peasant in Turgenev's works, the prevailing tone is one of deep pessimism....Peasant Russia does not make Turgenev happy. Somehow for a time, belief in the people was leaving him completely. The bright side of the peasant world in Turgenev's works was lost in an abyss of darkness, hate, stupidity, cruelty and drunkeness.[19]

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[18] Turgenev, Virgin Soil, p. 235.

[19] B. M. Sokolov, "Muzhiki v izobrazhenii Turgeneva" in I. N. Rozanov i Iu. M. Sokolov, eds., Tvorchestvo Turgeneva (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo Zadruga, 1920), pp. 232-233.

CHAPTER IV

BASIS FOR DISAPPOINTMENT

The populist movements of the seventies afforded an opportunity for Russia's intelligentsia to acquaint itself with the life of the peasantry. The intelligentsia's straightforward contact with the lower strata of society brought about unexpected results. As we have seen in the previous chapter, Turgenev clearly depicted the sudden destruction of the unblemished view of Russia's peasantry held by the intelligentsia at the time of the "going to the people" movement. A first hand knowledge of the peasantry's true nature evoked a reaction of disappointment within the minds of many intellectuals. This was particularly true among some of Russia's men of letters during that time. Like Turgenev, these writers now chose to portray the peasantry in a more realistic manner. In some cases, this reaction was so strong that they moved to the opposite extreme and depicted the peasantry in most negative terms. In this chapter, therefore, various anti-populistic works shall be discussed.

In many cases, it was the realistic writers of the nineteenth century that gave a full analysis of social conditions in Russia. Through close contact with Russia's rural life both Grigorovich and Turgenev were able to

gave a broad depiction of peasant life. Another writer, Nicholas Semenovich Leskov (1831 - 1895), gave an even broader depiction in some of his works.

This son of a petty official gained an excellent knowledge of peasant life during his childhood when his family lived in the village of Gorokhov. Following his elementary schooling, young Leskov worked as a petty official for a short time until, in 1857, he joined his English uncle Alexander Scott (the second husband of Leskov's aunt) who managed a series of estates belonging to a certain Count Perovskii. Working for Scott as a travelling agent for a period of four years during which time he performed various administrative duties, this writer had the opportunity of visiting estates located throughout different parts of southern Russia. Indeed, this job brought Leskov closer to the peasantry and the reports which he made regarding his work provided him with an excellent source of material for his later literary compositions. Concerning this period of his life, Leskov once proclaimed; "I did not make my way through to the people and their way of life by means of books and ready-made concepts. I studied them right on the spot."[1]

In such stories about Russia's peasant folk as

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[1]A. I. Faresov, Protiv techenii (S.-Peterburg: Tipografiia M. Merkushev, 1904), p. 20.

Produkt prirody (The Product of Nature), Iudol' (The Vale), Zagon (The Enclosure), Improvizatory (Improvisators) and others, Leskov shunned all embellishment of reality and gave no place to the sentimentalism of writers such as Grigorovich. Leskov's experiences with the peasantry caused him to believe that this class possessed many negative traits. Frequently, his stories portrayed the peasants as ignorant and uncultured.

One short story which vividly brought to light some of these characteristics was The Enclosure, first printed in 1893. In this story, the author relates the experiences of his uncle's family with the peasants. The Scotts were a russianized English family which had settled in Russia at the turn of the nineteenth century. The father of this family, "old James Scott," managed several large estates which were scattered throughout various parts of southern Russia. Seeing the great disadvantages of the primitive agricultural tools and outdated methods used by the Russian peasantry, James Scott made attempts to substitute the worthless Russian harrows and wooden ploughs with newer and more efficient lightweight ploughs made in Europe.[2] However, "the peasants did not want this change at all and they sternly stood for their old ploughs

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[2]N. S. Leskov, Sobranie sochinenii (Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1958), t. 9, p. 353.

and their harrows with wooden blades."[3] Nevertheless, James Scott ordered three new European-made ploughs so that he could demonstrate to the Russians the superiority of these newer implements. Indeed, the European product far exceeded its Russian counterpart in efficiency; even the Russians who saw the new plough in operation alongside the old wooden plough came to the conclusion that "the implement is capable."[4]

Convinced of the need to substitute the old ploughs for the new ones, the Russian landowner decided to buy and use the new European ploughs on his own estates. In order that he might have the additional support of his peasants in his final decision, he demanded their opinion on the matter. To his surprise, the following event took place:

> ...some kind of balding old man of Ukrainian breed crawled out from the centre of the crowd and asked, "Where do they plough with these pretty ploughs?"
>
> The count told him that they till the land with these "pretty ploughs" in foreign countries, in England, abroad.
>
> "That means in Germany?"
>
> "All right, in Germany!"
>
> The old man continued, "that means that those who buy our bread use them?"
>
> "Well, yes - if you please, they do."
>
> "That's good!...but when we start ploughing with these pretty ploughs, then pray tell, where will we buy our bread?"[5]

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[3] Leskov, Sobranie sochinenii, t. 9, p. 358.

[4] Ibid., p. 359.

[5] Ibid., pp. 359-360.

Such a question caught the landowner unawares. In spite of the peasant's obvious naivity and senseless reasoning on the matter, the landowner could not give a satisfactory answer to this simple peasant. Because foreigners bought grain from their Slavic neighbours who persisted in using the older methods of cultivation, this peasant firmly believed that any modernization in Russian agriculture would inevitably mean that the Russian peasants would not be able to produce enough grain for themselves, as well as for others.

During the time that Leskov worked as an administrator under his uncle Alexander Scott, he was given the responsibility of supervising a major transmigration of peasants into a virgin steppe region of southern Russia. His experiences during this major undertaking have been recorded in The Enclosure. This event described by Leskov provides us with an excellent study of the peasantry. Leskov tells us that the landowner, realizing that a group of his peasants was needlessly living at a subsistence level, decided to build a new village for them in an area which was previously unsettled. The homes of the newly-built village were a far cry from the filthy overcrowded hovels where the peasants had lived previously. Each new home was made of brick and was supplied with a stove, smoke stack, floor and covered with tiled roof. The village itself was neatly nestled against an enchanting pine forest. In all probability, these peasants had never

before been given the privilege to enjoy such spacious, clean and pleasant living conditions. Yet, after they had moved to take up residence in their new quarters, their reaction was most disappointing:

> ...when they came to this expanse from their crowded conditions...and saw this "stone village," the Orlov peasants became so determined not to live in it. "What kind of invention is this? If our granddads didn't live in stone buildings, we won't either." They rejected their new homes and at once thought of a new way in which they could get settled according to their own taste.[6]

The peasants' action which followed is even more disillusioning. Since lumber of the poorest quality was readily available, the peasants purchased it in order to erect their shabby and beggarly huts which differed very little from their first dwellings. Once again they began to reside in dirty, soot-ridden, overcrowded shacks while the new village was left to stand in great disrepair.

> Not even a month had passed by when all the superb homes were begrimed and the new village stank so terribly that it was impossible for one to drive through it without being overcome by the most extreme form of repugnancy.[7]

Furthermore, this same landowner attempted to improve life for his peasants by building a badly-needed common bath-house. But the peasants disdained this since they found that while using it, their feet "got cold."

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[6]Leskov, Sobranie sochinenii, t. 9, p. 362.

[7]Ibid.

The landowner's attempts to educate the peasants' children came to nought since the parents considered a school to be a place where children only made noise. Moreover, why should their children become smarter than their fathers, they maintained. Leskov could not understand why the peasants failed to see the goodness of their master, why they maliciously continued to harbour grudges against their would-be benefactor. The author could only pose this inexplainable question: "Why do they bear malice against him - I do not think they can explain this themselves."[8]

In the introduction to his story, Leskov discusses the fact that ever so often there are people in Russia who express the view that their country ought to stand apart from Western European countries "by means of the Chinese Wall."[9] That is, Russia should be free from all Western European influences. In connection with this notion, Leskov mentions that he once saw an illustration which displayed a dark cattle enclosure surrounded by a wall through which very little light could pass. To Leskov, the dark enclosure represented Russia whose people, particularly the peasantry, refused to let the "light" of Western European influences penetrate their secluded society. Indeed, Russia's peasantry stood in a "dark enclosure," separated from Europe. This "enclosure" was surrounded by a

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[8]Leskov, Sobranie sochinenii, t. 9, p. 362.

[9]Ibid., p. 356.

great wall - the peasantry's own enslavement to tradition and ignorance. According to Leskov's impressions, the peasants shamelessly eschewed any new innovation and shunned any new form of practice which deviated from their own tradition. Because of their ignorance, the peasants were blind to their own condition of depravity. Indeed, this dark and hopeless representation of Russia's peasantry shows us that Leskov's disillusionment in them was very great.

Another notable figure of Russian literature who wrote much concerning the peasantry was Gleb Ivanovich Uspenskii (1843 - 1904). During his childhood, Uspenskii attended gymnasium in Tula and Chernigov, cities in which his father was employed as a government official. Following the completion of his elementary education, Uspenskii attempted to enter university both in Petersburg and Moscow. Due to student unrest at the time and his own financial instability, Uspenskii was not able to enroll at these universities. Consequently, he was forced to take a job as a proofreader for a Moscow newspaper in 1862. During this time Uspenskii began to write short sketches on Russian life which appeared in various small journals. It was not until 1866 that Uspenskii actually received widespread recognition as a talented writer when his first major work, Nravy Rasteriaevnoi ulitsy (The Manners of Rasteriaevnaia Street), was first published in Sovremennik (The Contemporary) in 1866. This composition consisted

of several sketches which gave a realistic description of provincial city life in Russia during the sixties. Upon the examination of The Manners of Rasteriaevnaia Street, many critics saw in Uspenskii the beginnings of a truly talented writer. This encouraged him to continue writing and thus, between 1869 and 1871, Uspenskii produced a second major series of sketches on Russian life entitled Razoren'e (Ruin).

As many other raznochintsy of the early seventies, Uspenskii was so greatly affected by populist thought that he began to study peasant life in Russia. It was during this time that he took two trips to Western Europe. During his second visit to Europe (1875 - 1876), Uspenskii had the opportunity of personally meeting many important Russian populist revolutionaries who had fled their homeland as a result of the "going to the people" movement. Undoubtedly, the discussions which Uspenskii had with these revolutionaries affected his personal development as a populist.

Although Uspenskii's stay in Europe granted him an opportunity to enjoy mental and physical rest, his heart still remained in his fatherland. This he clearly indicated once in a letter to a friend while in Paris:

> ...I must spend June, July and August in Russia, in a village. I need this just as I need air, this is not rest, I have rested and have been strengthened once and for all in Paris, and now I am looking for an occasion to present my thoughts in flesh and blood, - I must see, I

> must live in the midst of the most genuine form of national life.[10]

These words expressed not only Uspenskii's aspirations, but they also represented the principal feeling of "repentant nobles" and many raznochintsy of the early seventies. It is rather interesting to note that in spite of the failure of the "going to the people" movements of 1873 and 1874 (in which he did not formally participate), Uspenskii still felt that "the most genuine form of national life" was to be found in Russia's villages. In his autobiographical sketch, he reveals that in his search for "the real truth of life," he was led to the peasant, "the source" of that truth.[11]

Uspenskii believed that the populist movement met utter failure not so much because of the peasantry's indifference to the populist youth, but because of the populists' ignorance concerning the ways of the peasant, his real needs and aspirations. In other words, Uspenskii believed that one had to observe carefully and study the ways and customs of the peasant before attempting to educate and assist him. The intelligentsia had never really gone into the villages of Russia with the sole purpose of studying peasant life there. Thus, Uspenskii contended:

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[10] G. I. Uspenskii, Sobranie sochinenii (Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1956), t. 9, p. 264.

[11] Ibid., p. 186.

> It is therefore necessary to become acquainted with the village, to find out what is in it, what it needs, what it thinks about and generally, what it is.[12]

With such motivation, he left the comforts of city life in 1877 to take up residence in the villages of Russia.

After spending several years in various villages, Uspenskii produced a trilogy on village and peasant life: Iz derevenskogo dnevnika (From a Village Diary, 1877 - 1880), Krest'ianin i krest'ianskii trud (The Peasant and Peasant Labour, 1880) and Vlast' zemli (The Power of the Soil, 1882). This trilogy consists of a series of semi-journalistic, semi-imaginative sketches which give a realistic depiction of peasant life.

After Uspenskii had lived in the village for a short while, he began to see the real nature of the peasant and the real situation which existed in the village. Instead of finding "the source of truth," Uspenskii was confronted with the deception, guile and falsehood of the village peasantry. We quote his own testimony regarding this discovery:

> Unfortunately, I found myself in such places where one could not find the source....Money had come to these places, I only saw to what extent a heartless peasant could go with his money. Within a one and a half year period I did not find one day or one night of peace.[13]

What proved particularly disappointing to him was the pre-

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[12] Uspenskii, Sobranie sochinenii, t. 4, p. 8.

[13] Ibid., t. 9, p. 186.

sence of a "new" type of peasant, the rich kulak who in most cases, gained wealth at the expense of fellow peasants. Uspenskii's disappointment in this regard was clearly shown by his trilogy where he depicted not only the positive, but also the negative traits of the peasantry. He explains this aspect of the trilogy by saying:

> ...I was criticized for the fact that I disliked the people, I wrote about them, what kind of swine they were, for indeed they did the basest things.[14]

Although Uspenskii exposed the negative traits of Russia's peasantry, as a populist, he still tended to idealize certain primitive aspects of this class. As the writer carefully observed every aspect of village and peasant life, he became convinced that in general, many peasants were impoverished and miserable because they lived in a social system which persistently refused to assist those who were in need. He gives an example of such a case when he tells of a certain peasant family which has experienced complete ruin because the father cannot engage in physical labour due to invalidism. Because of unpaid debts the village mir mercilessly confiscated the family's land while the family members were left to suffer.[15] Can it be possible, Uspenskii poses the question, that within an affluent village one can find a peasant family

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[14]Uspenskii, Sobranie sochinenii, t. 9, p. 186.

[15]Ibid., t. 4, p. 114.

on the verge of starvation? It is with biting sarcasm that he concludes: "It is apparent that at the heart of village order there are some mental imperfections which warrant attention."[16] Throughout various places in his works, Uspenskii did not hesitate to openly blame the existing social system for the pauperism and misery of many peasants. At the same time, however, he did not exclude other important causes of peasant poverty. Many times the peasantry itself was blamed for creating such conditions.

As it has already been mentioned, the writer's populist convictions caused him to idealize certain primitive features of the peasantry. Probably the one feature which impressed him the most was the peasantry's complete attachment and unreserved dependence on the land which he tilled. While studying peasant life, Uspenskii made a most revealing discovery concerning the real nature of the primitive land-tilling peasant:

> Ivan Afanas'ev is a rare example of a "peasant" in the full sense of this word, that is, he is a person who is inseperably linked with the soil, both in mind and in heart. According to his conception, the soil is his real bread-winner, the source of his joys, misfortunes, good and bad luck, and [it is the source - G. R.] of all his prayers and thanksgivings to God....Ivan Afanas'ev is not in love with the land...he is attached to it and he is attached with all that it goes through during the course of one year; he is attached to it like a husband is to his

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[16]Uspenskii, Sobranie sochinenii, t. 4, p. 115.

> wife, even more intimately, because they indeed live almost like one whole.[17]

Thus, for Uspenskii, the land-tilling peasant was a child of the soil, a product of Nature, for it was the land which determined every aspect of his life.

The soil captivated Ivan Afanas'ev to such an extent that when he was forced, for financial reasons, to take a job as a canal digger in a distant town, he was never happy. After six months, he returned home penniless, but nonetheless very pleased that he could once again resume his agricultural activities.

> His return to "peasantry," that is, to agricultural labour, once again restores all his moral strength, removes the signs of ailment, sorrow, indignation from his face, - and again, his face looks peaceful, noble and friendly...[18]

Working on the land to which he was so closely attached gave Ivan Afanas'ev the greatest sense of fulfilment; physical agricultural labour granted him the highest form of contentment, according to Uspenskii's impression.

In the second series of stories on peasant life, The Peasant and Peasant Labour, the reader meets another land-tilling peasant, Ivan Ermolaevich, who is described as an "aristocratic peasant soul" (that is, he represents Russia's conservative peasants). He, like Ivan Afanas'ev, is deeply rooted in the peasant agrarian culture which

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[17] Uspenskii, Sobranie sochinenii, t. 4, p. 43.

[18] Ibid., p. 47.

could be traced back to the Middle Ages. As an educated man, Uspenskii at first could not understand why Ivan Ermolaevich prefers to live in darkness and ignorance and to engage in agricultural activity which brings no positive long-lasting results to him. His primary reason for working so hard is that he and his family might "have their fill." Day after day, year after year, Ivan Ermolaevich toils from morning until night without a moment's respite. Together with his few moments of joy and encouragement, he experiences moments of poignant distress and disillusionment. "The futility of [such - G. R.] labour astonishes me, that is, its futility in relation to a human being, to his tears, joys...," writes Uspenskii.[19]

As Uspenskii carefully observed each aspect of peasant life, diligently searching for an adequate explanation to his urgent inquiry, he came to the conclusion that physical labour on the land for the conservative peasant represented a form of Art; it was "poetry" to him.[20] Without work the peasant was deprived of true meaning for his existence. Let us note Uspenskii's own explanation of this phenomenon:

> Except for the sphere of agricultural labour, there exists no other sphere in which ...his [Ivan Ermolaevich's - G. R.] thinking is so free, so daring, so intense; no other except

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[19] Uspenskii, Sobranie sochinenii, t. 5, p. 19.

[20] Ibid., p. 37.

> where there is a plough, a harrow, sheep, chickens, ducks, cows...[21]

As a result, Ivan Ermolaevich displays no interest in anything which does not directly affect his own secluded agrarian mode of life. Only his little world remains significant to him.

In his third major collection of sketches, The Power of the Soil, Uspenskii defined the peasant - land relationship even more precisely than he had done in his previous works. As the title indicates, it was the soil which actually became the determining factor in the life of the conservative peasant, according to Uspenskii. The soil wielded complete sway over the peasant. Nature and the soil taught the peasant to always submissively "obey" its laws. Thus, Nature fashioned the character of each conservative peasant. A person such as Ivan Ermolaevich, therefore, has developed into a stoic in the truest sense and he is capable of enduring the severest misfortunes. Uspenskii felt that peasants would remain submissive and obedient to higher ruling powers, whatever they might be, only as long as the soil would control them:

> The people will retain their strong and meek characteristics as long as the power of the soil reigns over them, as long as the impossibility of disobedience to its commands lies at the very root of their existence, as long as they [the commands of the soil - G. R.] hold

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[21]Uspenskii, Sobranie sochinenii, t. 5, p. 32.

> sway over the people's minds, conscience, as long as they fill the very life of the people.[22]

The peasant's ability to endure hardship and his submissiveness to higher powers carried over into other areas of his life. Because of lessons learned from Nature, he was fully prepared to passively submit to the authority of the tzar, government official and church priest. In the case of Ivan Ermolaevich, submissiveness to Nature has taught him loyalty to the tzar:

> The fortuities of all kind of politics he concentrates in the tzar. The tzar has gone to wage war, the tzar distributes bread. Whatever the tzar says, will be; money is to be given to the tzar...[23]

Ivan Ermolaevich knows almost nothing concerning his own rights as member of the obshchina. Furthermore, he does not question the powers of the local authorities over him, but simply accepts their rule. He does not really know to whom and for what reason he must pay dues. Neither does he have any conception of the significant role he can play in choosing members to the local elective council. "He was absolutely positive that all this did not concern him in the slightest way," writes Uspenskii.[24] Regarding his religious life, Ivan Ermolaevich is a strong believer in God and his faith is expressed through submissive obedience to the laws of the Church; consequently,

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[22]Uspenskii, Sobranie sochinenii, t. 5, p. 115.

[23]Ibid., p. 33.

[24]Ibid., p. 24.

Ivan has become a strong defender of Orthodoxy. The fact that the conservative peasant was obedient to higher authority proved most damaging to populist theories. Uspenskii showed that this peasant was not revolutionary in nature. Without realizing it, Uspenskii convincingly refuted the validity of those very populist notions which at one time he himself had embraced.

It is important to remember that in all his works, Uspenskii attempted to describe life as he actually saw it. He refused to explain reality by means of some preconceived conceptions and he certainly eschewed all embellishment of reality. Uspenskii's conclusions regarding the soil - peasant relationship were based on the fact that he actually saw the peasantry's attachment to the soil before his eyes. Besides this phenomenon, Uspenskii saw other peasant features of a more negative nature which he clearly exposed in his works. As a realist, he could not ignore these characteristics himself, nor could he conceal them from the reader. G. Plekhanov explains Uspenskii's sincerity and veracity as a writer in the following way:

> ...as a very observant and intelligent man, he soon notices that our razochinets' existing concept of "the people" does not correspond to reality at all. In this regard, he expresses many serious doubts which incur the fiery attacks of faithful populists.[25]

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[25]G. V. Plekhanov, "Gl.I. Uspenskii," in G. I. Uspenskii v russkoi kritike, p. 363.

The reader may recall that the populists were especially keen on the idea of collective and cooperative activity within the village obshchina. However, careful examination of the real peasant attitude towards cooperation revealed a most shocking result. Contrary to common populist belief, the peasant was an extreme individualist. Any idea of cooperative participation in community projects was completely foreign to him.

In one chapter of From a Village Diary, Uspenskii describes a situation in which a group of village peasants was in desperate need of a granary and mill. The only granary and mill to be found in the village belonged to a rich merchant who took advantage of the peasants' desperate situation by leasing these buildings at an unreasonably high price to them. What proved most disappointing to Uspenskii was the peasants' total acceptance of the situation and their attitude of irresponsibility to change it. On the one hand, they indignantly cursed "that scoundrel" who did nothing but sit and "drink his tea."[26] On the other hand, these peasants continually refused to devise a plan by which they could cooperatively build their own granary and mill and thereby, greatly improve conditions for themselves. Through this episode, Uspenskii demonstrated that the peasantry, as a rule, did not practise principles of cooperative communal activity.

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[26]Uspenskii, Sobranie sochinenii, t. 4, p. 199.

> But no one amongst the peasants thought of the possibility that they themselves could build a granary and assign an individual who could watch the mill and report to the mir. No one even mentioned it. Neither rituals, nor any form of organized order existed for such truly communal affairs.[27]

In The Peasant and Peasant Labour, Uspenskii shows that Ivan Ermolaevich, as a strong individualist, does not accept the whole concept of cooperation with other members of the obshchina. As a member of this community, he participates only in the menial tasks of distributing land and food, but any notion of collective work on the land or equal distribution remains extraneous to his way of thinking. When Uspenskii once suggested some advantages of cooperative work, Ivan Ermolaevich simply answered, "It won't work!"[28] Why? He has several reasons:

> ...How's it possible....If ten men will not lift a log, but I will carry it like a pen when necessary ...No, how's it possible. If someone says, 'men, let's leave it and go for dinner!' but I want to work...Now what will become of this - he'll leave and I'll have to work for him! No - it's impossible...[29]

Uspenskii was disillusioned in the peasantry because of its negative response to the suggestions and the program of the populists. As it has been shown, he himself was sympathetic to the beliefs of the populists. Nevertheless, at the same time, this did not prevent

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[27] Uspenskii, Sobranie sochinenii, t. 4, p. 199.

[28] Ibid., t. 5, p. 64.

[29] Ibid.

Uspenskii from finding some features in the peasantry which were attractive to him. In this regard, he felt strong attraction to the conservative land-tilling peasant. Although the Ivan Afanas'ev's and the Ivan Ermolaevich's of Russia were conservative and anti-revolutionary, they exhibited definite positive prepossessing characteristics, according to Uspenskii. They were hard workers who were devoted completely to their agricultural activities. Within the context of their simple life, they lived in complete harmony and peace. Uspenskii admired them for their honesty and integrity.

We should remember that Uspenskii was strongly influenced by populist thinking. Although he unmasked some definite negative features of the peasantry, he still tended to idealize the simplicity and "purity" of primitive peasant life. As a result, Uspenskii overestimated the soil's power over the land-tilling peasant. In his work on Uspenskii, N. I. Prutskov states that

> Uspenskii did not avoid making several exaggerations, simplifications and errors. He had a tendency to oversimplify the power of agricultural labour which influenced an individual and society in general....Occasionally, he digressed from a concrete historical examination of this problem and lapsed into the state of idealizing that type of individual who worked under the soil's power and lived by agricultural labour.[30]

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[30] N. I. Prutskov, Tvorcheskii put' Gleba Uspenskogo (Moskva, Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1958), p. 82.

This statement receives more clarification in M. A. Protopopov's article Oborotnaia storona medali (The Other Side of the Medal) which was published immediately following the publication of Uspenskii's The Power of the Soil in 1882. Protopopov agrees that the soil's power and agricultural labour play an important role in determining the peasantry's mode of life, but he feels that it is not determined exclusively on the basis of these two aspects. He writes:

> It is not only agricultural labour and "the impossibility of disobedience to the commands of the soil," as Uspenskii says, that affects the spiritual personality of an agricultural worker, but it is also the agrarian system, the forms of landownership, that is, it is not an elemental factor, but a social one.[31]

Nevertheless, for Uspenskii, the soil's power and agricultural labour determined every area of the primitive peasant's life. Furthermore, these influences created a peasant who was submissive, honest, honourable and hard working. In the conservative peasant's world of simplicity, the members did not know what it meant to be cunning, sly or fraudulent; instead, this world consisted of individuals who believed that "kindness was procured by showing kindness."[32] Uspenskii was so enchanted by this primitive culture that he wanted to preserve it in Russia. However, he sensed that this life was being slowly

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[31]M. A. Protopopov, "Oborotnaia storona medali" in G. I. Uspenskii v russkoi kritike, p. 233.

[32]Uspenskii, Sobranie sochinenii, t. 4, p. 44.

destroyed by the growing influences of "civilization." With "civilization" came deceit, malice, evil, cheating and many other negative features. And Uspenskii concluded:

> ...for the preservation of the Russian agricultural type, the agrarian system and harmony which is based upon the conditions of agricultural labour and all the people's private and communal relationships, it is necessary to continually counteract the influences which are destroying this harmony...[33]

However, in relation to populist aspirations, this statement contradicted his previous conclusions. Uspenskii showed very clearly that as long as the peasant retained his primitive traits, that is, as long as he lived under the control of Nature and the soil, he remained a staunch conservative, and consequently, he exhibited complete indifference to revolutionary ideas.[34]

At the same time, Uspenskii showed that during the late seventies and early eighties there was another group of "new" peasant types in Russia's villages - the kulaks. These peasants were no longer dominated by the soil. In Uspenskii's view, they were controlled by another power, the power of wealth and money.

With the inception of the 1861 Reform, former serfs received the right to establish enterprises and to carry on business and trade. The kulaks were those peasants who engaged primarily in such activity and through it

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[33]Uspenskii, Sobranie sochinenii, t. 4, p. 55.

[34]Ovsianiko-Kulikovskii, Sobranie sochinenii, t. 8, p. 155.

attained considerable wealth. The effect of the kulaks on village peasant life was most overwhelming.

Indeed, it was the actions of these rich peasants that disappointed Uspenskii more than anything else in village life. He took a most negative attitude towards them. In From a Village Diary, he portrays the lives of Mikhailo and Agrafena Petrov, representatives of the "new" peasant types. These people are greedy and roguish and, it seems that their only desire is to gain greater wealth:

> ...despite their success, with every passing day, both Agrafena and Mikhailo Petrov become greedier in their achievements. And what is important is that they still desire greater success. "It's not enough," "not enough," is what weighs heavily upon their common mind...[35]

Besides this, however, Mikhailo's and Agrafena's lust for riches causes them to lose all sense of moral concern for others. This differed significantly from the traditional peasant principle that "kindness is procured by showing kindness."

The villagers envy the Petrov's for their financial successes. Thinking that they too can attain wealth, the village peasants strive to imitate the ways of these kulaks. However, because they lack the cleverness of Mikhailo and his wife, most of them fail in their attempts to become wealthy. Nevertheless, these attempts have an extremely demoralizing effect on peasant relationships within the

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[35]Uspenskii, Sobranie sochinenii, t. 4, p. 103.

village.[36]

In The Power of the Soil, the author depicts the lives of Ivan Petrov and his wife. These kulaks even exhibit some positive features:

> ...he [Ivan Petrov - G. R.] is a man of strong character, easy-going, adroit and efficient in his work; his wife is a clever, strong and a dextrous worker...[37]

But they have also descended to the lowest level of village life, in Uspenskii's eyes. Having broken away from the soil, they have become avaricious individuals interested only in their own welfare. As a land-tilling peasant, Ivan Petrov lived in peace and harmony with his family and friends. As a kulak, he regularly beats his wife, he fails to give proper support to his children. He spends his money on drink. He also oppresses fellow peasants who come to him for help.

What is the real cause of Ivan Petrov's depravity? "It's freedom! Liberty!" Ivan answered on one occasion.[38] Uspenskii continues to explain that disharmony in Ivan's life results from an "easy life":

> ...Ivan began to lose all meaning for his existence as [life - G. R.] was becoming "easier" for him, and he found in his hands so much money which he had not seen before in a dream. The man who, because of "disorder," set out to work for a wage and received a good position and money, seemingly

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[36] Uspenskii, Sobranie sochinenii, t. 4, p. 103.

[37] Ibid., t. 5, p. 101.

[38] Ibid., p. 106.

> forgot what he should do with it. He begins to fling money like chips. He says: "It's all because of freedom."[39]

But another basic question is posed: why did Ivan leave the soil to which he was so closely linked? Since the 1861 Reform, each land-tilling peasant family received one-half less land than he had during serfdom.[40] At least in this respect, contends Uspenskii, serfdom was a more reasonable system of land distribution. Moreover, the emancipated peasant carried a financial burden which was almost impossible to repay. The peasant, therefore, had to either take a job for wages or establish his own small enterprise which meant that now the central interest for him was money, not land.

Uspenskii believed that during serfdom there was still another practice which was most reasonable, but which in recent times was quickly fading from village life. During the days of serfdom each peasant worked and utilized his own resources for his own profit. Uspenskii saw that during his day different peasants, particularly the kulaks, profited from another's work and used the resources of other people for their own purposes. Such action promoted the destruction of the former peace and harmony which existed among the peasants. Now, says Uspenskii, a typical reaction of a villager who has been

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[39] Uspenskii, Sobranie sochinenii, t. 5, p. 110.

[40] Ibid., pp. 159-162.

wronged by another is: "Let him fall into my hands...and I too will show him how to get rich on my account..."[41]

Uspenskii shows that the class of land-tilling peasants was being slowly destroyed by the evil practices of kulaks. The new demand of the times, "give us money," was heard throughout all levels of peasant society. But the conservative peasant group did not truly understand its significance. The peasant who still lived under the power of the soil knew only that he needed money to pay his immediate debts and to buy some small necessities. However, he did not realize that by saving even some of his meager earnings, he could escape utter poverty sometime in the future. As indicated by Uspenskii here, the conservative peasant was steeped too deeply in his primitive life to comprehend his true predicament:

> The secret of this [the conservative peasant's - G. R.] failure consists in the fact that the peasant is an ignorant person who has not grown out of "peasantry." He cannot live in any other way except around his own house and family. But what is important is that he understands poorly all that goes on beyond the walls of his little house. He cannot generalize and systemize the phenomena of life which condemn him...[42]

Because the conservative group was incapable of adopting practices which would effectively counteract the growing influence of the kulaks, Uspenskii felt that

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[41]Uspenskii, Sobranie sochinenii, t. 5, p. 145.

[42]Ibid., t. 4, p. 103.

primitive peasantry would soon disappear.[43] This possibility greatly disturbed and disappointed him. Consequently, he implored the Russian intelligentsia to do all within its power to save the primitive forms of peasant life.

In 1897, Russia's reading public was profoundly stirred by the appearance of an anti-populistic short story entitled Muzhiki (Peasants). Its author was the already famous Anton Pavlovich Chekhov (1860 - 1904). In this short story, the author endeavoured to sketch Russian village life in its true light.

In discussing Chekhov, we should remember that he was a continuous positivist. In his works, he stood against all utopian conceptions, ideas or theories of mankind which promised social reconstruction and improvement. As an impressionist (often, the term "realistic impressionism" has been applied to Chekhov's works[44]), he set himself the task of depicting reality objectively. In connection with this, we may briefly mention his own words which express his general outlook on literature. In a letter of May 30, 1888 to his friend and colleague A. S. Suvorin, Chekhov wrote:

> ...the writer of fiction should not try to solve such questions as those of God, pessimism, etc. His business is but to describe those who have been speaking or thinking about God and pessimism,

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[43] Ovsianiko-Kulikovskii, Sobranie sochinenii, t. 8, p. 154.

[44] A. V. Lunacharskii, Sobranie sochinenii (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1963), t. 1,p. 371.

> how, and under what circumstances. The artist should be, not the judge of his characters and their conversations, but only an unbiased witness.[45]

Later, Chekhov wrote to Suvorin expressing the view that the writer is obliged only to present the problems of society in his literary work, but not to solve them.[46]

We really cannot conclude that in his short story Peasants Chekhov expressed his disappointment in the peasantry. Indeed, he was not fascinated by the peasants of Russia, nor was he ever disappointed in them. Therefore, we could even omit an analysis of this work. Yet, Chekhov's short stories, which depict rural life in an extremely gloomy manner, deserve to be mentioned here [47] because they played an important role in the general stream of those literary works created on the basis of disappointment in the peasantry.

Peasants was written at a time when the author himself lived in the country. Between 1892 and 1898 Chekhov lived at his country estate "Melikhovo" located about sixty miles south of Moscow. There, as a physician and district official, he came into intimate contact with country life.

In Peasants, Chekhov depicts the life of an ailing waiter, a certain Nicholas Chilkideev, who returns to his

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[45] A. P. Chekhov, Letters, ed. L. S. Friedland and pref. E. J. Simmons (New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1964), p.58.

[46] Ibid., p. 60.

[47] Peasants has been chosen as the most characteristic of this group. Included in this group are works such as Moia zhizn' (My Life), Bab'e tsarstvo (Woman's Kingdom).

native village Zhukovo together with his wife Olga and their daughter in the hope of regaining his health. Through the eyes of these characters, Chekhov presents peasant and village life in all its agonizing ugliness.

Nicholas has fond recollections of the village from his boyhood years. Now, however, when he catches sight of his parents' residence, he is greatly disappointed. It is nothing more than a cramped, dingy and filthy hovel. His disappointment is intensified by the sight of the people who live in it. Nicholas' father and mother are both bent with age, toothless and haggard. The two daughters-in-law, Marya and Foykla with their eight children, are also beautiless in their appearance. The family evening scene is most disgusting to Nicholas:

> Nicholas...saw the whole family, all these bodies large and small, swarming on the sleeping platform, in cradles and in all the corners. He saw how ravenously the old man and women ate their black-bread, dipping it in water, and he knew that he had been wrong to come here...[48]

The peasant world of Zhukovo is a world in which human relationships are marred by gross insensitivity, drunkeness and brutality. Marya's drunk husband Kiryak, for example, often comes home only to cruelly beat his wife before other family members. She submissively takes the blows while others idly stand by and make no attempt to defend her. To be sure, there is hardly a moment of

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[48] A. P. Chekhov, The Oxford Chekhov, trans. and ed. R. Hingley (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), Vol. VIII, p. 196.

complete peace in the Chilkideev home. The shrieks of Nicholas' mother are intermingled with the shouts of other family members.

Filth is widespread throughout the village and Nicholas discovers that even an "outsider" such as he cannot escape it. This feature is so common in Zhukovo that the peasants simply accept it as a normal part of their lives. Some of them even prefer it. Yet, to the one who knows nothing of this filthiness, such village practices prove most repugnant. The following scene is a good example of this:

> She [Foykla - G. R.] emptied slops outside the front door, splashing them out from the step and even walked barefoot in the puddles.[49]

Chekhov demonstrates that the village men, because of their perpetual state of drunkeness and gross ignorance, are incapable of doing anything orderly and efficiently. At one point of the story, the author records the events which take place at the scene of a fire. Once word has reached a group of drunken men that a nearby hut is in flames, they clumsily haul the town fire-engine to the burning building, stumbling and falling along the way. At the scene of the fire no order exists and nobody knows what should be done first. It is only after a group of men from the manor house arrive that the blaze is finally

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[49]Chekhov, The Oxford Chekhov, Vol. VIII, p. 210.

extinguished.[50]

Although Chekhov saw in the peasantry ignorance, cruelty and filthiness, he attempted to find human traits in them. Thus, he describes their feelings during religious ceremonies. As icons are passed before them, they bow with tears of emotion streaming down their face. Church music and the tolling of church bells deeply moves the hearts of peasants. Chekhov shows that they express basic human desires and for a few moments at least, they escape the harsh realities of life:

> Everyone seemed to understand at once that there was no void between heaven and earth, that the rich and strong had not yet grabbed everything, that there was still someone to protect them against illtreatment, slavery and bondage, against intolerable grinding poverty and the demon vodka.[51]

Yet, Chekhov shows that their lives do not change. When the service ends, they return to their former ways - drunkeness and quarrelling is revived, filthiness is not abated.

But why does one find such a low standard of living in the Russian village? The author implies that various contributing factors give rise to such conditions. Firstly, almost all villagers suffer from extreme "grinding" poverty. Nicholas' father admits that the peasants were better off during the days of serfdom because extreme

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[50]Chekhov, The Oxford Chekhov, Vol. VIII, pp. 207-208.

[51]Ibid., p. 218.

poverty was not known.[52] Secondly, one receives the strong impression that part of the blame rested upon the peasants themselves. Chekhov stresses this point when he writes:

> Who keeps the pot-house and makes the peasant drunk? The peasant. Who squanders his village, school and church funds on drink? The peasant. Who steals from his neighbours, sets fire to their property and perjures himself in court for a bottle of vodka? Who is the first to run down the peasant at council and other meetings? The peasant.[53]

At the end of the story, Olga expresses her disenchantment in the village folk very clearly. After her husband has died of consumption, she is prepared to leave the village with her daughter. The following thoughts run through her mind:

> During the summer and winter there had been hours and days when these people seemed to live worse than beasts. They were frightful people to live with - rough, dishonest, filthy, drunken. Holding each other in mutual disrespect, fear and suspicion, they were always at loggerheads, always squabbling.[54]

Nevertheless, Olga also realizes that even though these people act in such a way, they are true human beings who bear a heavy burden as a result of their strenuous toil and life of hardship:

> Still, they were men and women, they suffered and wept like men and women, and there was nothing in their lives for which an excuse could not be found - back-breaking work that makes you

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[52]Chekhov, The Oxford Chekhov, Vol. VIII, p. 210.

[53]Ibid., p. 221.

[54]Ibid.

> ache all over at night, cruel winters, poor harvests and overcrowding, with no help and nowhere to turn for it. The richer and stronger ones...are rough, dishonest and drunken themselves and use the same filthy language. The pettiest official or clerk treats the peasants like tramps...[55]

Chekhov was a humanist and in his writings, he continuously expressed limitless compassion for his heroes whether they possessed attractive or repulsive traits.[56] Peasants is a good example of this Chekhovian principle. Chekhov also manifested truly humanistic tendencies in real life. During his "Melikhovo Period" he often did not hesitate to visit peasant families with ailing members even though they were scattered throughout various country points and villages. He gave medical aid to those who were in need. Often this was done when he himself was ill.[57] He expresses the same compassion for the villagers in Peasants.

One of the darkest depictions of Russian peasant life was given by the writer Ivan Alekseevich Bunin (1870 - 1953). His most famous work, Derevnia (The Village, 1910), was unprecedented in its pessimistic attitude towards this class.

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[55]Chekhov, The Oxford Chekhov, Vol. VIII, p. 221.

[56]K. Chukovskii, Sobranie sochinenii (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo Khudozestvennaia literatura, 1967), t. 5, p. 658.

[57]Nemirovsky, I., A Life of Chekhov, trans. E. DeMauny (London: The Grey Walls Press Ltd., 1950), pp. 132-133.

Bunin himself spent his early youth in the country on his father's estate which was located near the city of Voronezh. He received his elementary schooling in Elets and later continued to study on his own under the guidance of his educated elder brother. Bunin entered the field of literature as early as 1887 when his first poem was printed in Rodina (Homeland). He worked as a journalist for various Russian newspapers and journals. He also devoted much time to fiction. Following his marriage in 1907, Bunin and his wife travelled extensively throughout Western Europe and the Orient. During this period he spent a few years with Maxim Gorky on the island of Capri. Shortly after his return to Russia, the revolution erupted. Because he could not agree with the policies of the Bolsheviks, Bunin left Russia in 1920 and lived in France until his death in 1953. One of his happiest moments came in 1933 when he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature.

In his literary works Bunin dealt with various themes. He was an esthete and wrote about the beautiful and the eternal in mundane life. Many works were also devoted to the peasant and village theme. In his early works he portrayed the peasants with tenderness and compassion, that is, to some extent in the manner of populistic literaty tradition. However, he did not become famous through his early works. As K. Chukovskii

once wrote:

> ...his [Bunin's - G. R.] early novelles were not popular with the reading public. "They are nice, poetic - but nothing more." This was the common opinion.[58]

Bunin's populistic attitude, however, changed drastically during his mature period. Between 1909 and 1914 he wrote a series of prose compositions which were solely devoted to the depiction of Russia's peasantry. During this time he was obsessed with the baser side of the peasantry. What he saw in the villages and rural areas of Russia was primarily of a negative nature. He was deeply disappointed in the peasant class. This he expressed vehemently in his so-called "dark tales." These works also showed that Bunin possessed great artistic talent. Chukovskii pointed this out when he wrote:

> In the compositions of the new Bunin there is laconic, clear and harsh depiction. The plot is energetic and often burning...but most important, [one finds - G. R.] depth in his penetration to the spiritual life of the people.[59]

The Village constituted the beginning of Bunin's "dark period." It was followed by a whole series of other "dark tales." After 1914, however, the peasant theme was greatly abated and Bunin's attitude towards them was both pessimistic and favourable.

What motivated Bunin to portray the Russian pea-

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[58]Chukovskii, Sobranie sochinenii, t. 6, p. 103.

[59]Ibid., p. 104.

santry in a gloomy manner? One can account for this by suggesting two possible reasons. Firstly, Bunin's "dark period" corresponded very closely to the time of growing social unrest in Russia. The people were already reacting against poverty, famine and war. The revolutionary movement was gaining momentum. Bunin greatly feared revolution and the effects that it might have on the people. Secondly, this was the period of Bunin's closest friendship with Maxim Gorky. Their companionship was suddenly broken in 1917 as a result of differences in political convictions.[60]

Gorky did not view Russian peasant life favourably. As a journalist, he often described the adverse conditions of the villages and denounced the illiteracy of the peasants who lived in them. In one article, for example, he wrote:

> Our peasantry lives in horrible conditions, lacking properly organized medical care....The villages have sunk into destitution, ignorance and savagery. The Russian peasant is unable to cultivate his land so that it will yield the greatest possible amount of food....the illiteracy of the peasantry, and its cultural helplessness, is the major reason for our backwardness...[61]

As an intellectual, Gorky generally did not put his faith in Russia's peasantry.

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[60] I. Bunin, Memories and Portraits, trans. V. Traill and R. Chancellor (London: John Lehmann, 1951), p. 78.

[61] M. Gorky, Untimely Thoughts, trans. and introd. H. Ermoleav (New York: Paul S. Eriksson, Inc., 1968), pp. 44-45.

It was on the advice of Gorky that Bunin wrote The Village. In a letter of September 12, 1909, Bunin wrote to Gorky: "I returned to that which you advised - to my story about the village."[62] Later, in a letter of December 17, 1910, while talking about The Village, Bunin personally thanked Gorky for spraying him with the "living water" of reality.[63] It is significant to mention that after 1914, their close relationship began to wane. This also was the year in which Bunin ceased to write exclusively on the peasants.

The Village was the main novel of his "dark period." It is centered around the lives of two brothers, Tikhon and Kuzma Krasov, who, as young men, engage in a small trading business together. Following a sharp argument, the brothers parted company and lived separately for many years. Only during late adulthood do they come together. The Village is not unified by the traditional type of plot. Instead, the whole story is a series of descriptions and personal reflections on peasant life made by the two brothers. In the first half of the novel, the reader sees the life of Russia's peasantry primarily through the eyes of Tikhon and in the second, primarily through the eyes of Kuzma. Thus, in actuality, Bunin

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[62] Gor'kovskie chteniia: 1958 - 1959 (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1961), p. 44.

[63] Ibid., p. 56.

uses Tikhon and Kuzma as characters through whom he can express his own impressions on Russian village life and thereby, his own feeling of disappointment in the Russian peasantry. Indeed, according to Tikhon's and Kuzma's descriptions, the world of Russia's peasantry is a world of outrageous filth, arrant pauperism, oppressive insensibility and extreme ignorance.

Not only is the behaviour of the peasantry repulsive, but even the rural surroundings in which they live arouse feelings of aversion and disgust. Early in the novel, Tikhon visits the village of his childhood. While wandering about the countryside which was so familiar to him, he comes upon a serene church graveyard:

> And what peace, what repose, was round about, in that sunny stillness within the enclosure of the ancient churchyard! A hot breeze drifted across the crests of the bright trees....And when it died away the sun once more heated up the flowers and the grass; birds warbled sweetly in the languor; sumptuously hued butterflies sank motionless upon the hot paths...[64]

In spite of such serenity, Tikhon's thoughts become darkened by other things. As he walks down the rows of gravestones, he begins to read the verses on them which speak of eternal peace and happiness. However, his impression is not positive, but extremely negative:

> And these verses struck Tikhon Ilitch as hypocritical. But in this place even a lie was touching. For - where is truth? Yonder in the bushes lies

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[64] I. Bunin, The Village, trans. I. F. Hapgood (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1923), p. 34.

> a human jawbone, neglected, looking as if it were made of dirty wax - all that remains of man. But is it all? Flowers, ribbons, crosses, coffins, and bones in the earth decay - all is death and corruption.[65]

Where one would expect that the shining of the sun and the singing of birds would arouse feelings of happiness, the opposite happens to Tikhon. He can only think of death and decay.

Tikhon's negative impressions are intensified even more by village and peasant life. The village next to his estate was never free of filthiness. During the summer, it was besmeared with mud and mire; during the winter, its condition did not improve. The following is a typical winter scene in the village:

> ...the blizzards began and swept the country, burying it under so much snow that the village assumed a bleak northern aspect and began to show as its black points only the doors and tiny windows, which hardly peeped out from amid the white masses of the earthen banks around the houses.[66]

Throughout the novel, the peasants were drawn in the darkest colours. Through Tikhon and Kuzma, Bunin attempted to bring out some of the basest features of peasant life. "I have, I may say, roamed about the world a good bit," proclaimed Kuzma once while talking to his brother about Russia's peasantry, "well, and what then? Absolutely nowhere have I seen more tiresome and

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[65] Bunin, The Village, pp. 35-36.

[66] Ibid., p. 239.

lazy types."[67] Even the appearance of these people caused one to turn away in utter disgust. In this regard, it is interesting to note one scene of the novel in which a peasant group slowly parades home after spending a long day at the market:

> Drunken peasants returning from the Fair - red-headed, black-haired, flaxen-haired, but all alike, hideous and tattered, and with about ten crowded into each cart-raised clouds of dust as they whipped their wretched little horses.[68]

The filthiness and unsightliness of the peasant is a theme which is predominant throughout the whole novel.

Bunin shows that the peasants did not exhibit any concern for hygiene. According to the descriptions given in The Village, these people could not even comprehend what it meant to live in cleanliness. Let us consider, for example, one event in Tikhon's life which demonstrates this fact very powerfully. While driving through a village, Tikhon caught sight of a naked peasant washing himself in a pond. It is most sickening to read that the water of that pond was thick and yellowish and that a herd of cows was quietly standing in it and urinating. So nauseating was it that a horse would not even drink it. Yet, when the peasant was asked whether people actually drank this foul mixture, he cheerfully shouted: "We've been drinking it these thousand years!"[69] What becomes most astonish-

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[67]Bunin, The Village, p. 62.

[68]Ibid., p. 38.

[69]Ibid., p. 40.

ing is the fact that such filth and putrefaction does not affect the feelings of the peasants in the slightest way. They remain completely oblivious to such conditions.

Filth has become so common in rural life that both brothers cannot escape it, for they find it on every turn. Kuzma also notices this characteristic feature as he observes the following scene in a certain village:

> The mud on the roads was bluish, greasy; the green of the trees, of the grass, of the vegetable gardens was dark and dense...But the cottages were of clay, tiny, with roofs of manure. Alongside them stood dried-up water casks. Of course, the water in them contained tadpoles....in the part of the cottage appropriated to human occupation, darkness and eternally cramped conditions most inevitably reign...[70]

Coupled with this indifference to filthiness is the problem of extreme poverty which plagued almost every peasant family. Bunin shows that most families perpetually lived "from hand to mouth." Such was the case for one poor peasant, Syery, who is described as "the poorest and laziest peasant in the whole village."[71] Because Syery continually refused to work, his family was on the verge of ruin and starvation. The point of the matter, therefore, is that the extreme poverty of Syery's family is not only a result of village conditions, but it is a result of the father's laziness. It is little wonder that

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[70]Bunin, The Village, pp. 165-166.

[71]I. A. Bunin, Sobranie sochinenii (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1965), t. 3, p. 99. Because these lines are omitted in I. F. Hapgood's translation, I introduce my own rendering here.

the people experienced a famine every five years. What is most disgusting, however, is that this famine occurred in the most fertile area of Russia.

Furthermore, many peasants demonstrated ignominious ignorance in relation to their own work. They could not even perform some of their most basic tasks in life. As Kuzma says:

> "Just you consider: they've been tilling the soil for a whole thousand years - what am I saying? for longer than that! - but how to till the soil properly not a soul of them understands! They don't know how to do their one and only business! They don't know the proper time to begin field work! Nor when to sow, nor when to reap!"[72]

Bunin typified this total darkness and extreme ignorance of the peasantry in an old villager, Ivanushka. One would naturally expect that this old man who has spent his days in the village would be respected for his supposed wisdom and experience. To the contrary, the author finds very few positive features in him:

> He [Ivanushka - G. R.] was an old-fashioned peasant who had grown foolish from old age.... Thickset, bent into a bow, he never lifted his shaggy dark brown head. He always walked with his toes turned inward.[73]

Ivanushka's life in the village has made him an illiterate, simple and benighted individual who speaks nothing but nonsense:

> He narrated in his clumsy, ancient language that the Tsar was made entirely of gold; that the

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[72] Bunin, The Village, pp. 272-273.

[73] Ibid., p. 250.

> Tsar could not eat fish - 'twas exceeding salt - that once on a time the Prophet Elijah broke through the sky and tumbled down on the earth - "he was exceeding heavy" -....He was firmly convinced that his family had died, not of cholera, but because after a fire they had gone to a new cottage and had passed the night in it without having first let a cock spend the night there, and that he and his son had been saved solely by accident: he had slept on the grainrick.[74]

Bunin strove to de-idealize the Russian peasant by also showing his insensitivity to human feelings and sufferings. The peasant community, he implies, is a community in which the members cheat each other, lie to each other and hate each other. It is a world in which son beats father and father beats son; a young wife who has participated in a sex orgy poisons her husband in order that she might escape punishment from him; a husband sells his wife for dirt-cheap price. It is a world in which the sweet singing of birds arouses feelings of death and the desire to kill. Kuzma observes such moral decay in every aspect of peasant existence. He is convinced that it could be found in Russian history, in the Russian epics and folks songs and also in the people's proverbs.[75] Like his brother, Tikhon also believes that this society seems to have no sense of moral value. He says of it:

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[74]Bunin, The Village, pp. 252-253.

[75]Ibid., pp. 72-73.

> "The people! Lewd, lazy, liars and so shameless that not one of them believes another!...And they are all like that - every one of them!"[76]

The death of loved ones does not affect the feelings of the people. At one point in the novel, Kuzma comes upon a peasant household which has just experienced the death of one of its members. Although a little child has died, no tears of sorrow are shed, nor is there any sense of regret within the family. The family members display complete indifference to the child's death. The following scene demonstrates very powerfully the attitude of insensitivity within peasant society:

> At the table sat a fat blind young girl, fishing with a wooden spoon for bits of bread in a bowl of milk. The flies were buzzing around her like bees in a hive, they were crawling along the dead little face [of the child beside her - G. R.] and falling into the milk. But the blind girl, sitting erect as a stuffed statue, with her eyeballs staring into the darkness, continued to eat and eat.[77]

Later in the novel, Kuzma himself passed through an experience during which time he realized that, indeed, there was no compassion for anyone in the Russian village. When Kuzma was almost at the point of death, his brother and a group of friends calmly spoke of his impending death

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[76]Bunin, The Village, p. 273.

[77]Bunin, Sobranie sochinenii, t. 3, p. 84. Because this portion of I. F. Hapgood's translation is inexact (he omits several clauses), I introduce my own rendering here.

in Kuzma's very presence.[78] Kuzma felt no pity, no compassion, no love from anyone during his illness. He only sensed indifference and coldness:

> But, my God! was it not madness to hope for pity in Durnovka [the village - G. R.] ?...the simple, quiet voices of Koshel and the Bride seemed to him pitiless, alien and strange, as the life of well people always appears pitiless, alien, strange to a sick person.[79]

Aside from what has been discussed to this point, The Village also describes peasant life during the time of the 1905 Russian Revolt. According to Bunin's view, even during the course of this revolt, the peasantry showed no capability to act decisively and intelligently. In the novel, the author implies that one could hardly expect a group of half-witted and submissive people such as Russia's peasantry to succeed in their attempts to drive out the landowners. And indeed, when they do revolt, little becomes of it:

> On one and the same day, the peasants had risen through almost the entire county. The inns in the town were crowded for a long time thereafter with land-owners who had sought protection of the authorities. Afterwards, Tikhon Ilitch recalled with shame that he also had sought it - with shame, because the whole uprising had been limited to the Durnovka people's shouting for a while, doing a lot of damage, and then quieting down.[80]

Bunin seems to suggest that degeneracy was evident not only in rural Russia, but in all of Russia, at least

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[78]Bunin, The Village, p. 259.

[79]Ibid.

[80]Ibid., p. 53.

to some extent. Early in his career, Kuzma once expressed the opinion that writers ought to write more about Russian people. His half-educated tutor, old Balashkin, challenged his pupil's naive statement by declaring: "All Russia is nothing but a village: get that firmly fixed in your noddle!"[81] For Bunin, this cancerous degeneracy was not only prevalent in the village, but also in the Russian people in general.

As we have already seen, both Tikhon and Kuzma were used by Bunin to pass harsh judgements on the depravity of the people. Although both men were not true peasants, their lives were as unproductive and disappointing as the lives of the peasants whom they intensely despised. Tikhon became a landowner and shopkeeper, while Kuzma had succeeded in educating himself. But both men strongly sensed that their lives had been wasted, for indeed they had accomplished nothing positive. Consequently, they were never happy. It is with deep regret that Tikhon realized this fact:

> "My life ought to be written up..." But what was there to write about? Nothing. Nothing at all, or nothing of any consequence. Why, he himself could recall scarcely anything of that life.[82]

Kuzma also strongly believed that his life, like his brother's, was a complete failure. "...all the while,

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[81] Bunin, The Village, p. 143.

[82] Ibid., p. 103.

he was overwhelmed with the conviction that he was wasting - had wasted - his life," wrote Bunin concerning Kuzma.[83] However, such an outcome surprises nobody, for the society from which the brothers have emerged has exercised great influence upon their beings.

Who really was to blame for the abominable conditions of Russia's village people? Bunin does not give us a definite answer, but he does seem to suggest two possible reasons. On the one hand, the Russian people still suffered as a result of the continuing effects of injustices incurred upon them in the past. But on the other, the people lived in such conditions as a direct result of their own stupidity and negligence. It was for this reason that Kuzma concludes:

> 'Tis only forty five years since serfdom was abolished - so what can be expected of the people? Yes, but who is to blame for it? The people themselves.[84]

This extremely negative outlook on the peasantry continued to live in the minds of Russian literary men. Also the Soviet party leaders never really did put their faith in this class, even though it formed the majority of Russia's population. Many of them expressed more hope in the working class than in the peasantry. After

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[83]Bunin, The Village, p. 103.

[84]Ibid., p. 162.

the 1917 Revolution, the peasant question gave rise to serious disputes and divisions within the Communist Party of Russia.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

During the fifties and sixties of the nineteenth century there was a strong tendency within the Russian intelligentsia to idealize the peasantry. Having been influenced by the main beliefs of Khomiakov, Hertzen, Mikhailovsky and others, many intellectuals believed that social change in Russia could be accomplished most effectively through the peasantry. It was felt that this class, together with the intelligentsia, could build a new socialistic system based exclusively upon the already existing communal obshchiny. Many intellectuals who had acquainted themselves with Russian life in the country during the "going to the people" movements discovered that the peasants differed markedly from the established faultless view of them. The peasants' indifference to the populist dogmas caused some of Russia's intelligentsia to lose faith in this class.

Both the idealized view of the peasantry and subsequent disillusionment in it was reflected in the works of various Russian writers. In this study, Grigorovich's The Village and Anton Goremyka and Turgenev's A Sportsman's Notebook served as examples of those literary works in which the writers created peasant heroes with

unblemished and attractive characters. Grigorovich depicted his heroes in the manner of sentimentalism, while Turgenev utilized more realistic methods in his portrayal of them.

Following the failure of the populist movements, some Russian writers conceived a very unfavourable impression of the peasants. Consequently, in various literary works written by these authors, the peasants were drawn in exclusively dark colours. Turgenev expressed his negative attitude towards them in Virgin Soil. In this novel, he represented the peasants as a senseless and drunken mob which manifested complete apathy to the exhortations of the young populists.

Leskov and Uspenskii discussed the conservatism of the peasant folk in their works. In The Enclosure, Leskov showed that the old agricultural implements used by Russia's peasants for centuries still held an attraction for them. This was so even though the newer tools proved to be much more efficient. Leskov also pointed out that they preferred to live in filthiness and cramped conditions.

Uspenskii attempted to fully explain the relationship of the conservative land-tilling peasant to the soil. He felt that the power of the soil became the determining factor of every aspect of the peasant's existence. Because of his populist convictions, Uspenskii tended to idealize

the conservative peasant. He was, however, disheartened to see that the conservative peasant was an individualist. That is, he did not care for cooperative activity. Moreover, he was submissive to higher authority and did not exhibit the slightest interest concerning his own role in the choosing of members to the local elective body. Uspenskii also harshly criticized the kulaks whose lust for riches caused a demoralizing effect on traditional village life.

Although Chekhov expressed neither enchantment nor disenchantment in the peasantry, his short story Peasants did concentrate on their baser side. The villagers lived in gross ignorance and outrageous filth. There was never-ending friction among them - sharp quarrels and brutal beatings were a common sight, according to Chekhov's description. The author felt that many problems in the village were caused by the peasants themselves. At the same time, as a humanist, Chekhov recognized that they were human beings who needed the genuine concern of others in society.

In relation to other Russian literary works created on the basis of disappointment in the peasantry, the darkest and gloomiest representation of peasant and village life was given by Bunin in The Village. According to the portrayal found therein, Russia's peasant class lived in the most extreme form of filth and poverty. It displayed unbelievable

ignorance. Human relationships in the village were continually characterized by callous insensitivity. Indeed, the author of this novel had little, if any, hope for Russia's peasantry.

Some negative depiction of this class continued to develop in literary works of the Soviet period. A study of it would certainly prove interesting. Unfortunately, it does not fall within the limits of this thesis.

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